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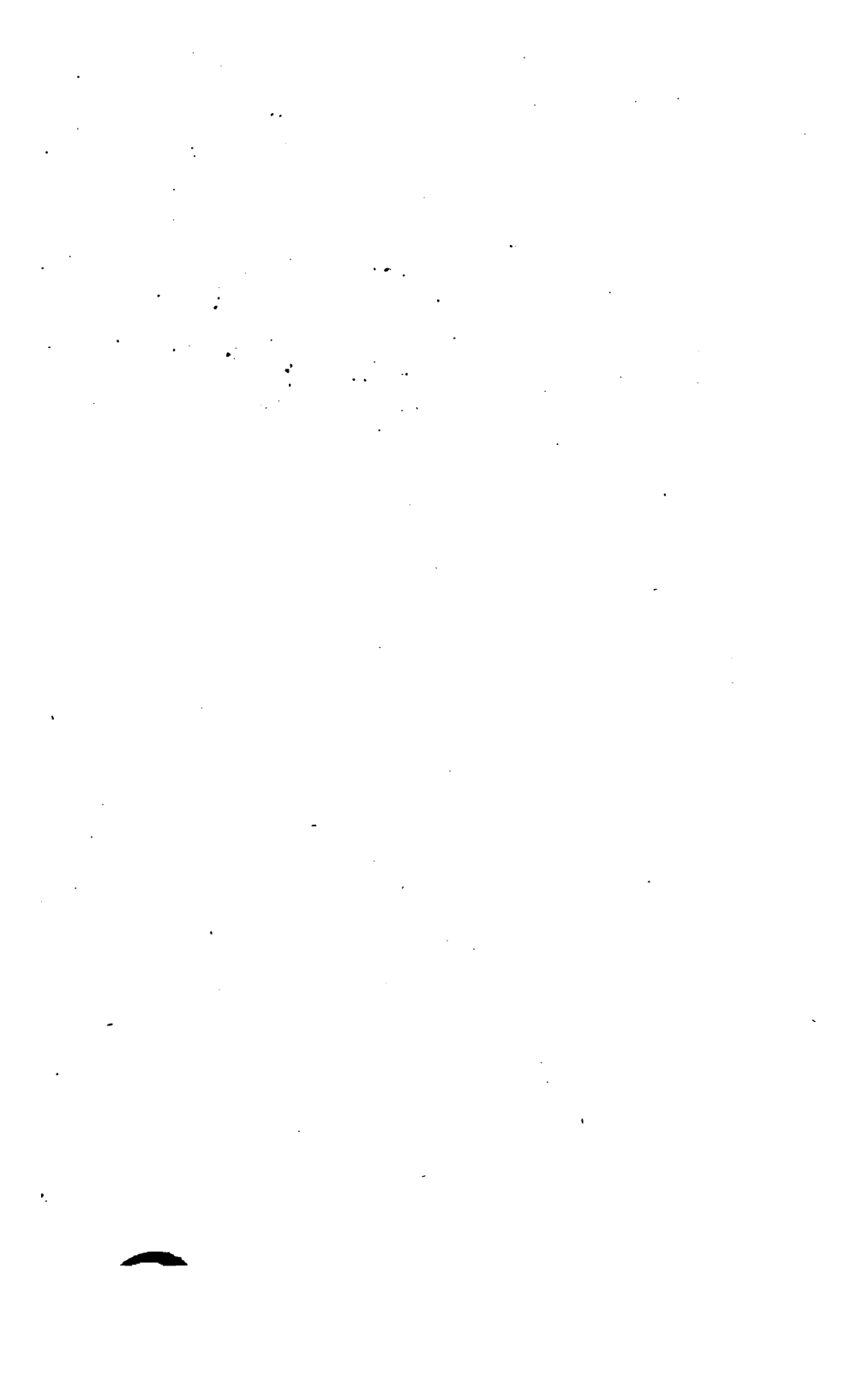
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Viscount Middleton
with very kind regards
St Johnston

A TRANSLATION
OF
DANTE'S PARADISO.











MONUMENT
TO
D A N T E.
IN THE CHURCH OF THE SANTA CROCE, IN FLORENCE.

Alta mente u' si profondo
Saver fu messo, che se il vero à vero,
A veder tanto non surse il secondo.

PARADISO, Canto x., Line 112.

Io per me direi che nell' Inferno Dante à più
Che uomo, nel Purgatorio mi pare un angelo,
Nel Paradiso, divino.

Leonardo Salviati.

A
TRANSLATION

OF

89601

DANTE'S PARADISO,

BY

DAVID JOHNSTON.

O degli altri poeti onore e lume,
Vagliami il lungo studio e il grande amore,
Che m' han fatto cercar lo tuo volume ;
Tu se' lo mio maestro e il mio autore.

INF., Canto i., 82.

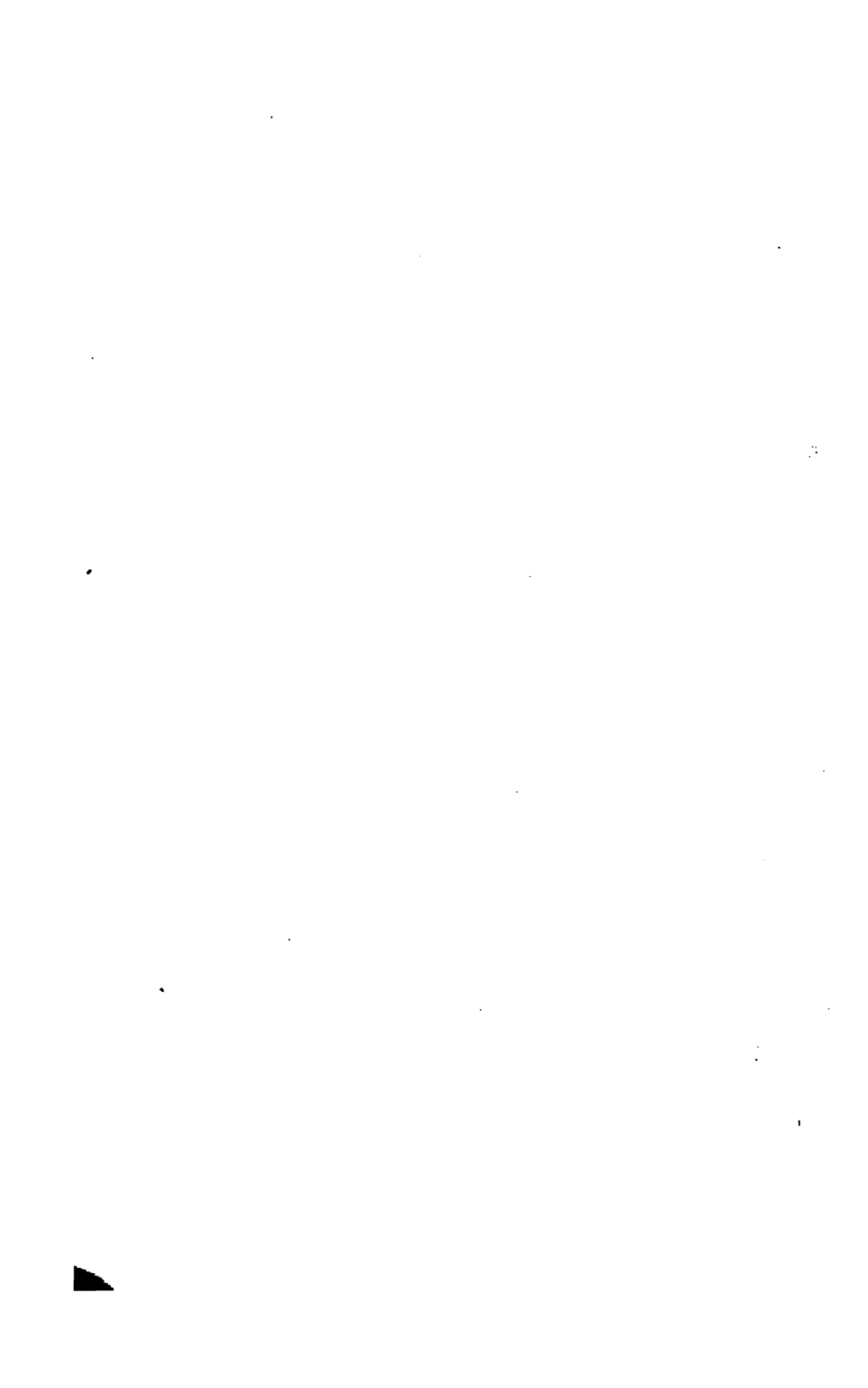
BATH :

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MDCCCLXVIII.



TO MY DEAR WIFE
I DEDICATE MY TRANSLATION
OF THE "PARADISO."



In the last Canto of the *Purgatorio* Dante was left in the other Hemisphere, and on the summit of the Mount of Purgatory, under the Meridian Circle, this being the position of the earthly Paradise. The *Paradiso* opens with the ascent of Beatrice and the Poet towards the starry firmament. They first approach the concavity of the sphere of fire, which is the same as the convexity or superficies of the air through which they had passed. They are then carried upwards into the concavity of the Moon, from whence they pass into that of Mercury, which is the same as the convexity of the Lunar Heaven. In like manner they ascend from planet to planet, until they reach the concavity of the *Primum Mobile*, or Ninth Sphere. Above this is situated the Empyrean Heaven, the immediate abode of the Almighty, which, itself immoveable, moves and rules the whole universe. It will be perceived, then, that Dante follows the astronomical system of Ptolemy. He places the earth immoveable in the centre of the universe. Around it he makes the different spheres or heavens to revolve in orbits circular and concentric ; the swiftness of their respective movements being in the order of their distance from the centre. These heavens are, the Moon, Mercury, Venus, the Sun, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn ; the eighth is that of the Fixed Stars ; the ninth is the *Primum Mobile*, which impresses its movement on the others. Above, beyond, and around them all is the Empyrean.

The Heavenly Paradise is described by the Poet as being in the form of a pure white rose. The leaves are so many rows of seats on which sit the saints clothed in

white robes. On one of the most exalted seats Dante sees the Virgin Mary, under whom, in gradation down to the yellow centre of the rose, which is a mighty blaze of fervent light, are seated the Hebrew women of the Old Testament celebrated for their faith. On the opposite part is seated John the Baptist, and under him, in similar manner by gradation, the spirits contemplative of the New Covenant. These and the Hebrew women divide the rose, as by a partition, into two equal portions, and these are again subdivided towards the centre of the flower. On the right of Mary are the elect of the New Covenant, occupying the half of one of the first divisions. On the right of the Baptist are the saints of the Old Covenant similarly situated.

From the middle of the rose downward on the right of Mary are the Infants of the New Testament saved by baptism. On the right of the Baptist are those Infants who have been saved by the faith of their parents and by circumcision. The above divisions present this difference : that whilst the seats of the Old Testament saints are all occupied, those of the New Testament saints are partially unoccupied, the empty seats being reserved for the souls yet to be saved.

Over the rose in form of a canopy is the Tribunal of God, around which circulate for ever the nine orders of angels, forming three Hierarchies. These are continually descending into and re-ascending from the body of the rose.

The Poet believes Paradise to exist in the Empyrean Heaven alone, yet he places the spirits of the blest in the different lower spheres, in the same manner as he partitions the spirits in Purgatory and in Hell. They are

thus placed by him to shew the measure of their beatitude. Speaking of the lunar sphere, he says in Canto IV. of the Paradiso, line 37—

Qui si mostraron non perchè sortita
Sia questa spera lor, ma per far segno
Della celestial c'ha men salita.

The spirits truly abide in Paradise but are seen in the lower spheres that Dante might perceive by sense the extent of their beatitude ; for as Aristotle says, "*Nihil est in intellectu nisi prius fuerit in sensu* ;" or, as the Poet himself expresses the same sentiment in Canto IV., line 41, of the Paradiso—

Perocchè solo da sensato apprende
Ciò che fa poscia d' intelletto degno.

The seven lower spheres or planets then shew the seven degrees of beatitude ; in the eighth sphere, or that of the fixed stars, are represented the triumphs of Christ ; in the ninth, or Primum Mobile, are the nine choirs of angels circling round the Almighty, represented as a point of intense light. The Empyrean, or highest heaven, is the Paradise or immediate abode of the Triune and eternal God, the centre of everlasting praise and adoration to the two Hosts of Heaven.

So ends the vision of Dante, and with the following words he terminates the Divina Commedia, and teaches a lesson for all men to follow—

All' alta fantasia qui mancò possa,
Ma già volgeva il mio desiro e il *velle*,
Si come ruota che igualmente è mossa,
L'Amor che muove il sole e l' altre stelle.

13, Marlborough Buildings,
Dec., 1868.

Patet ergo, quomodo ratio manifestat, divinum lumen, id est divinam bonitatem, sapientiam, et virtutem, resplendere ubique. Similiter etiam, ac scientia facit auctoritas; dicit enim Spiritus Sanctus per Hieremiam; cœlum et terram ego impleo. Et in Psalmo; Quo ibo a spiritu tuo, et quo a facie tua fugiam? Si ascendero in cœlum, tu illic es; si descendero in infernum, ades. Et sapientia dicit quod spiritus domini replevit orbem terrarum. Et Ecclesiastici 42, Gloria domini plenum est opus ejus. Quod etiam scriptura paganorum contestatur; nam Lucanus in nono:

Jupiter est quodcumque vides; quocumque moveris.

Bene ergo dictum quod dicimus: radius, seu divina gloria, per Universum penetrat et splendet; penetrat quantum ad essentiam, resplendet quantum ad esse.

DANTE, nella Pistola a Can Grande.

CANTO I.

Beatrice and Dante, having quitted the Terrestrial Paradise, pass upwards towards the Heavenly. The Poet is filled with wonder at the marvellous light which surrounds him. He is stirred by doubts, and Beatrice resolves them.

The glory of the All-mover, Lord supreme,
Pervades creation, and refulgent shines,
In one part brighter, in another less.
In that high heaven most lustrous with His light
I was, and things I saw which to repeat 5
He who from thence descends knows not nor dares ;
For near the object of its great desire,
So deeply ponders man's intelligence,
That to such depths no memory travels back.
And yet as much of that celestial realm 10
As I had power to treasure in my mind
Shall furnish now the matter of my song.
Oh, good Apollo, in my latest work
Make me as rich a vessel of thy strength
As thy beloved laurel shall demand. 15

One summit of Parnassus until this
Sufficed to me, but now my need is both,
That I may enter the remaining lists.
Into my bosom pass, there breathe thy strain,
As when thine anger Marsyas uncased, 20
His limbs unsheathing from their covering skin.
Oh, Faculty Divine, if Thou wilt grant
So much of Thee that of the blessed realm
I may disclose the shadow I retain,
Then shalt Thou see me reach the plant beloved, 25
And with its leaves my head in honour crown,
Made worthy by my subject and by thee.
Leaves plucked so seldom, Father, to adorn
A Cæsar's triumph, or a poet's fame ;
(Through the disgrace and shame of men's desires !) 30
That when the frond, child of Peneus' wave,
Is sought with true desire, it must bring forth
Fresh birth of joy to the glad Delphic god.
A mighty flame a little spark succeeds ;
So after me perhaps with nobler words 35
Such prayer may rise that Cirra shall respond.
At different points to mortals upward rolls
The lamp of the great world ; but from that point
Where the four circles the three crosses form,
With fairer course, and with a gentler star 40
Conjoined it rises, and the mundaane wax
It moulds and tempers to its own sweet ways.

At such a point it made the morning there,
And evening here,—and almost brightness shone
In that far hemisphere, and darkness here, 45
When I saw Beatrice towards the left
Move round, and look unblenching on the sun ;
Never so fearless was the eagle's gaze.
But as the second ray is wont to spring
Reflected from the first, again to rise, 50
As the far pilgrim would to home return,
So through the eyes transmitted by her act
To my perception, was my own conceived,
And not as mortal on the sun I gazed.
Much is permitted there not here allowed 55
To sense of man, so hallowed is the place
Made for the human race the proper home.
Not long my gaze, and yet not small my course,
Before I saw the sun irradiant flush,
As when the iron from the furnace flows. 60
And suddenly it seemed that to the day
A day was added, as if power supreme
Had with another sun the heavens adorned.
With eyes fixed wholly on the eternal wheels
Stood Beatrice ; and I, with mine withdrawn 65
From the great sun and fixed on her alone,
Was by her aspect as renewed within
As Glaucus when he tasted the green herb,
And shared the nature of the ocean gods.

How man may rise to essence more than man's 70
 No tongue can tell, but this example serves
 For whom the experience is reserved by grace.
 If I were now that part alone of self
 Last formed by Thee, oh, Ruler ! love divine !
 Thou knowest, for Thy light hath brought me here. 75
 When that rotation Thou eternal mad'st,
 Thou all-desired ! drew me itself towards
 With a most sweet and measured harmony,
 So widely seemed the heavenly sphere to burn
 With the sun's flame, that neither rain nor stream 80
 Formed ever lake so ample in its bounds.
 The newness of the sound and the great light
 Inflamed me with desire to know the cause,
 Such had I never felt so strong and keen.
 So she who saw me as myself I saw, 85
 To tranquillize the trouble of my mind,
 Ere I had time to ask, unclosed her lips,
 And thus began—"Thou mak'st thyself so dull
 " With false imaginings, that thou canst not see
 " What would be clear if these were cast aside. 90
 " On earth thou art not as thou seem'st to think ;
 " But lightning flies not from its proper home
 " Swift as thou now returnest unto thine."
 If from my first doubt I was thus relieved
 By her sweet words and their attending smile, 95
 A new doubt held me tighter in its net ;

And so I said—" I am content, and rest

" From one great wonder ; but I marvel now

" How through such subtle bodies I can mount."

After a sigh with holy pity fraught,

100

She turned to me her eyes, wearing the look

A mother casts upon her erring child ;

And thus began—" All things created hold

" One of another, and in this consists

" The likeness which creation bears to God.

105

" Herein all reasoning creatures own the mark

" Of the Eternal power, which is the end

" For which this very law has been ordained.

" By the great rule I speak of are inclined

" All beings, of whatever essence these,

110

" More or less closely to the Primal Cause ;

" Wherefore as destined they are onwards moved

" Through the great sea of being, and to each

" Is given the instinct to attain its end.

" By this is fire borne upwards to the moon ;

115

" This is the motive power in mortal hearts ;

" It binds and holds in union the gross earth.

" Not only creatures, who no portion have

" Of pure intelligence, this bow impels,

" But those who know both intellect and love.

120

" That Providence, whose wisdom ruleth all,

" With its own light the heaven makes ever peace,

" Under which rolls the swiftest of the spheres.

- " And then to it as to a place decreed,
 " The tension of this cord transporteth up 125
 " Whome'er it pointeth to this blessed mark.
" True is it that as form does not agree
 " Always with what the artist's mind intends,
 " Because the answering matter is inert,
" So from this cause instinctive breaks away 130
 " At times the creature, which is given the power
 " To take, though thus impelled, the other part,
" (And as it may be seen that fire can fall
 " Down from the thunder cloud), if primal bent
 " Is by false pleasure to the earth allured. 135
" Therefore, methinks, thou needst not wonder more
 " At thine ascent than at a stream which flows
 " Down from some lofty mountain to a plain.
" As great the wonder were, if being freed
 " From every hindrance, thou wert bound to earth, 140
 " As if the living fire were so content."
Thus having said she turned her gaze to heaven.

CANTO II.

Dante enters into the Lunar Heaven. He seeks an explanation of the shadow marks observed from the Earth on the surface of the Moon. Beatrice explains.

Oh ye, who in your slight and fragile bark,
With eager wish to listen, follow close
In my ship's wake, which singing holds her way,
To your own shores turn ye your course again,
Tempt not the open ocean, for perchance 5
In losing me, your ruin shall be sure.
Upon the sea I dare none ever sailed ;
Minerva breathes, Apollo guides my helm,
And the Nine Muses point the guiding Bears.
And ye, the other few who turn in time 10
To the true bread of angels, fed by which,
Man liveth, but can never surfeit know,
Through the salt deep in safety you may plough,
Keeping the furrow open which I make
Before you in the wave so quick to close. 15

Those glorious Greeks who sailed to Colchis' strand,

Felt not the wonder you have yet to feel,

When they saw Jason guide the labouring ox.

The increate and everlasting thirst

For God's own Holy Kingdom bore us on,

20

Swift almost as you see the heavens revolve.

Upward looked Beatrice, and I looked on her ;

And in such instant as an arrow flies

Between the slackened cord and stricken mark,

I was in body where a marvel turned

25

Mine eyes towards itself, and then did she,

From whom my mind's desire could not be hid,

Bend round to me as glad as beautiful,

And say,—“ To God thy grateful spirit raise,

“ For He hath brought us to the nearest star.”

30

It seemed as if a cloud enveloped us,

Shining and dense, solid and smooth without,

Like to a diamond which the sun has struck.

Into itself the moon, celestial pearl,

Drew us, as water takes into itself

35

The luminous ray, and still unbroken rests.

If I was matter, if none here conceive

How in one space two bodies co-exist,

Which must, if body body penetrate ;

How much more mighty should be the desire

40

That Essence to behold, in which is seen

How to its God our nature can be joined.

Him we shall see whom we now hold by faith,
Not by the senses, but at once discerned,
As a first truth or axiom man believes. 45

“Lady,” I answered, “with my whole heart’s strength
“I strive to worship, and to Him give thanks,
“Who thus hath brought me far from mortal things.
“But tell to me what are those stains obscure
“On the moon’s surface, whence on earth below 50
“Cometh the common fable told of Cain.”

She answered, gently smiling,—“If mankind
“In their opinion into error fall,
“Where with the key of sense they would unlock,
“Surely ’tis not for thee to be so stirred 55
“With wonder ; since if sense alone be guide,
“Thou knowest well that reason lags behind.
“But tell me what thine own thoughts be thereon.”

I said :—“The varied aspect seen above
“Methinks is caused by matter rare and dense.” 60

“Truly,” she said, “shall thy belief be found
“Submerged in error, if thou listenest well
“To the opposing argument I urge.
“In the eighth sphere celestial are displayed
“Lights many, which by brightness or by size 65
“In aspect vary to the gazer’s eye.
“If this the effect alone of rare or dense,
“One only influence would subsist in all,
“More or less spread as the proportion held.

- " A various influence must be the fruit 70
 " Of varied essences, and yet save one,
 " These, as thou reasonest, non-existent were.
- " Further, if rarity the lunar stains
 " Caused, and thy question solved, either in parts
 " Void of its matter would the planet be 75
- " Throughout its bulk, or as we find disposed
 " The fat and lean in bodies, so would this
 " Throughout its volume have its leaves amassed.
- " If true the one, it would be clearly seen,
 " For in the sun's eclipse his light would pass 80
 " Just as it penetrates some other void.
- " It is not so ; therefore we now must look
 " Into the other, which if I refute,
 " Then thy opinion shall by proof be false.
- " If the void pass not wholly through the moon 85
 " Somewhere it must have end, and at such point
 " By the opposing matter light is barred ;
- " And then the solar ray reflection gives,
 " Just as a colour passing through a glass
 " Which has a leaden lining at its back. 90
- " But thou wilt say that in those spots the ray
 " Shows itself darker than in other parts,
 " By being reflected farther from within.
- " From this insistance may release be found,
 " If thou wilt seek it in experiment, 95
 " The fount from which all human knowledge springs.

- " Three mirrors thou shalt place, two from thyself
 " Distant alike, the third one more remote,
 " Reaching thine eye between the other two.
 " If then behind thee and towards thee turned 100
 " A light be placed which shall illumine these,
 " And from them all back to thy vision come,
 " Although in size proportionate the light
 " Is in the farthest smaller, thou shalt note
 " That yet it shineth as the others do. 105
 " Now as when stricken by the heated ray
 " Denuded is the substance of the snow,
 " Both of its whiteness and its proper cold,
 " So thine intelligence, made void like this,
 " I would replenish with a living light, 110
 " Such as shall make it radiant as a star.
 " Beneath the heaven supreme of peace divine
 " A lower rolls, and in its virtue rests
 " The essence of all things which it contains.
 " The sequent heaven, so rich with starry eyes, 115
 " Its influence metes to essences diverse,
 " Distinct from it yet in itself contained.
 " The other spheres, according as endowed,
 " The proper virtue resident in each
 " To its own objects and effects dispose. 120
 " Thus work those members of the universe,
 " As thou now seest them, in gradation clear,
 " And what each takes above it gives below.

- “ Observe me well, consider well the way
“ Which I now take to reach thy heart’s desire, 125
“ So of thyself the river thou shalt ford.
“ Movement and virtue in those holy spheres,
“ As from the workman comes the chisel’s art,
“ Must come from breathings of the angelic host.
“ And the heaven beautiful with countless stars, 130
“ From the deep impress of its motor mind,
“ Receives the stamp, and then becomes the seal.
“ And as the soul, within thy frame of dust,
“ Into its various organs, all designed
“ For various acts and functions, is resolved, 135
“ So doth this ruling mind its force divine
“ Through myriad orbs and multifold infuse,
“ Whilst its own unity it still retains.
“ This various virtue variously affects
“ Each stellar glory, which it maketh quick 140
“ By junction with it, just as life in you.
“ From the glad nature whence itself derived,
“ The power diffusive through the body shines,
“ As gladness shineth through the living eye.
“ And hence that difference cometh which is seen 145
“ ’Twixt light and light, not because dense or rare ;
“ This is the cause intrinsic which creates,
“ As rules its energy, the dark or bright.”

CANTO III.

The Poet sees in the Moon the Spirits of such as have been faithless to their religious vows, and who therefore enjoy a lower degree of glory than the other Saints. He sees the Sister of Foresè, Piccarda de' Donati, and also the Empress Constantia. Further doubts cleared up.

That sun which erewhile fired my heart with love
Had shown me both by proof and by disproof
The aspect sweet of a most gracious truth ;
And to confess myself at once convinced
Of truth and error, far as needful was, 5
My head I raised in speaking more erect.
When, lo ! what seemed a vision held me stayed
So fully on itself, itself to know,
That all remembrance of confession fled.
As in transparent glass faultless throughout, 10
Or perhaps water clear and undisturbed,
But not so deep as to conceal its bed,
Our features come to us reflected back
So faint, a pearl upon a snow-white brow
Strikes not the pupil with more feeble ray ; 15

So saw I faces many, prompt to speak,
Therefore my error was reverse of his
Who in the fountain saw and loved the man.
No sooner I perceived them than with haste,
Thinking them figures by reflection cast, 20
To see whose they might be I looked around,
And nothing seeing, turned again mine eyes
Full to the light of my most gentle guide,
Whose eyes with smiles of holy radiance shone.
“ Let not thy wonder wake because I smile,” 25
She said to me, “at thy most childish thoughts,
“ Since still thy judgment builds not on the truth,
“ But, as its wont, to vanity returns.
“ These are true essences thou lookest on,
“ Here relegated for their broken vows. 30
“ But speak to them, and hear them, then believe,
“ Because the light of truth, which is their joy,
“ Will not permit them from itself to stray.”
So to the shade which most desirous seemed
To speak with me, I turned, and I began, 35
Somewhat like one whose wish outruns his sense—
“ Oh, thou elected soul, who of the rays
“ Of light eternal hast the sweetness proved,
“ Which if not tasted cannot be conceived ;
“ Grateful shall be my thanks if thou art pleased 40
“ To tell thy name, and your condition all ;”
On which with readiness and smiling eyes,

She said—"Our charity is never cold.

"To a just wish ; then were it not like His

"Who wills that all His court His likeness wear. 45

"On earth a virgin sister I was vowed ;

"And if thou look on me with mental eye,

"Me shall my holier beauty not conceal

"But that thou recognise Piccarda's form,

"Who with those other blessed ones am placed, 50

"Blessed myself, in heaven's least rapid sphere.

"All our desires, which by the love alone

"Of the most Holy Spirit are inflamed,

"Fixed in the order of His will are glad ;

"And thus our place assigned, which seems so low, 55

"Is given to us because our vows were left

"Neglected, and in measure unfulfilled."

"In these your wondrous aspects," then I said,

"Shineth I know not what of light divine,

"Which changes you from what I first conceived ; 60

"Therefore in my remembrance I was slow ;

"But what thou now hast said gives me such help,

"Your features I can easily recall.

"But tell me, ye who are so happy here,

"Soar not your wishes to a higher place 65

"Where He is nearer, and more full His love ?"

First with the other shades she gently smiled,

And then she answered with so glad a mien

She seemed with love ineffable to burn ;

“ Brother,” she said, “ our wills are quite content, 70
“ For in the strength of mighty love we wish
“ Only what we possess and nothing more.
“ If we should crave a higher sphere to reach,
“ Then our desire would in discordance be
“ With Him whose will our place for us decreed ; 75
“ And discord in these orbs may not be found,
“ For if we here must wholly dwell in love,
“ And that love’s quality is studied well,
“ Essential rather to the blessed state
“ Is being held within the will of God, 80
“ Because, if so, then all our wills are one.
“ Therefore as we are spread from heaven to heaven
“ Throughout this realm, the realm entire is pleased,
“ As He, the King, who wills us to His will ;
“ And in His will it is our peace resides ; 85
“ It is the ocean whither all things move
“ By Him created or by nature made.”
Then clear to me it was that every spot
In heaven is Paradise, although the grace
Of the First Good showers not on all alike. 90
But as it is if one food satiates,
And for another still desire remains,
We pray for this, for that we render thanks,
So was it with myself in act and word,
Seeking from her to know why in the web 95
She did not draw the shuttle to the end.

- " A perfect life, a holier merit placed
 " A saint in higher bliss," was her reply,
 " Whose rule by veil and habit binds on earth
 " Those who till death both day and night must live 100
 " With Him, the spouse who every vow accepts,
 " Which to His pleasure is by love conformed.
 " To follow her from the great world I fled,
 " Youthful in years, and in her habit clothed,
 " I vowed through life her holy rule to keep. 105
 " But men more used to evil than to good
 " From the sweet cloister dragged me forth by force ;
 " God knows alone the sequel of my life !
 " This other glorious spirit, who is seen
 " Here at my right, and who in brightness glows 110
 " With all the full refulgence of our sphere,
 " Knows what I say applies to her as well ;
 " A sister—from her brow, as from my own,
 " Was torn the covering of the sacred veil.
 " But when brought back to the great world again, 115
 " Against her will, against all custom pure,
 " The veil was never loosened from her heart.
 " Of great Constantia, lo ! thou seest the soul,
 " Who by the second pride of Suabia's house
 " Conceived the third, and of his puissance last." 120
 Such were her words ; then she began to chant
Ave Maria, vanishing in song
 As through deep water heavy bodies glide.

Mine eyes, which followed her so long as power

Was theirs to trace her as she passed away,

125

Turned to the object of more fond desire—

With my whole soul to Beatrice I looked ;

But she so flashed upon me, for a time

I could not bear the glory of her looks ;

And so more tardy my requests became.

130

CANTO IV.

Dante is still affected by doubts respecting the Place and Essence of the Blest,—and also concerning Will mixed and absolute. He seeks to know if any compensation can be made for broken vows in the performance of other good works.

Between two meats distant alike and each
Alike seductive, with the power to choose,
One might of hunger die before he ate.
Just so between two fierce and hungry wolves
A lamb would stand, in deadly dread of both ; 5
And thus between two dogs would stand a deer.
Therefore if I were silent, by my doubts
With equal force impelled, I take no blame,
And, as it was necessity, no praise.
Silent I was, but painted on my face 10
Was my desire, and with it my request,
More pressingly than if by words conveyed.
And now did Beatrice that which Daniel did,
Nebuchadnezzar calming from his rage,
Rage which had made him ruthlessly unjust. 15

She said—" I clearly see how thrusts thee on

" Thy double wish, so that thy restless will

" Is so self-fettered, outward utterance fails.

" Thou reasonest thus :—If Will remain resolved,

" Why should the violence of another's crime

20

" Make less the measure which my merit claims ?

" This further proves to thee a cause of doubt,

" That spirits to the stars seem to return,

" As Plato in his argument affirms.

" These are the questions which upon thy mind

25

" Weigh with an equal weight, and therefore first

" That will I touch on which hath most of gall.

" He, of the seraphim most one with God,

" Moses and Samuel, and the either John,

" No matter which, nay blessèd Mary's self,

30

" Have not their resting place in other heaven

" Than that in which those thou now seest are,

" Nor rest in bliss, some more, some fewer years ;

" But all make fair the Empyrean sphere,

" And their beatitude is more or less,

35

" As on each one the eternal glory breathes.

" Here they are seen, not because they are doomed

" To this the lunar sphere, but to give proof

" That they in heaven possess the lowest state.

" To reach thy mind need is there thus to speak,

40

" Since only from material things it learns

" What after-time suits to the intellect.

- It is for this that Scripture condescends
" To man's capacity, and feet and hands
" To God attributes, though it mean it not ; 45
" And Holy Church with aspect human brings
" Gabriel and Michael to man's mortal sense,
" And the Archangel who Tobias healed.
" The reasoning of Timæus on the soul
" Resembleth not that which is witnessed here, 50
" For what he says it seems that he believes.
" He says the soul returns to its own star,
" Believing that it first was stirred from thence,
" When nature made it spirit to the man.
" Perhaps his meaning points at something else 55
" Than bear the words he speaks, and it may be
" Has a significance we may not slight ;
" If it be this, that to those orbs return
" The honour of their influence and its blame,
" Perhaps in some respects he holds the truth. 60
" Ill understood this principle misled
" Almost the world entire, which erring named
" The planets Mercury, and Mars, and Jove.
" The other doubt which in thy spirit stirs
" Hath less of venom, for its malice fails 65
" The power to separate betwixt thee and me.
" If then our justice shall appear unjust
" To the dull eye of mortals, 'tis the test
" Of faith, not cause of wicked heresy.

- " But that thy understanding may have force 70
 " Fully within this verity to pierce,
 " I shall contentment bring to thy desire.
" If this be violence, when the sufferer gives
 " Consent in nothing to the agent's act,
 " Those souls can plead not this for their excuse ; 75
" For will, though willing not, is yet not dead,
 " But does as nature doeth in the flame,
 " Which spite of thousand efforts rises still.
" Wherefore the will which yieldeth less or more,
 " Assents to violence,—and such was theirs, 80
 " Who to the holy place had power to turn.
" Had their free will remained in purpose firm
 " As that which held St. Laurence on the grate,
 " Or Mutius led to sacrifice his hand,
" Then would their footsteps have retrod the way 85
 " Where force had dragged them, soon as freedom came ;
 " But human will is rarely firm like this ;
" And by these words if treasured in thy mind
 " As seemly is, that reasoning is disproved
 " Which yet had brought much trouble to thy soul. 90
" But now another difficulty drives
 " Athwart thy vision, in thyself from which
 " Is no escape, till weary with the attempt.
" I have assuredly thy mind convinced
 " That a blest soul hath not the power to lie, 95
 " For it is ever near the Truth Divine ;

- “ And from Piccarda thou mayest since have learnt
“ That still Constantia held the veil beloved,
“ So that she seems at issue with me here.
“ Times many, oh, my brother, it hath chanced 100
“ A peril to avoid, that man hath done
“ Reluctantly what was unmeet to do ;
“ Thus did Alcmæon, conquered by the prayer
“ Of his own father, his own mother slay ;
“ Not to lose pity he was pitiless. 105
“ Unto this point I would thy thought direct,
“ In violence ever mixture is of will,
“ So that offences may not be excused.
“ Will absolute consents not to the sin,
“ But so far only as the fear exists ; 110
“ Should it refuse, it comes to greater woe.
“ And therefore when Piccarda speaketh thus,
“ She the will absolute, I the other mean,
“ So that in truth not much between us lies.”
So flowed the waters of the sacred rill 115
Which from the fount of truth eternal welled
And such made all my wishes rest in peace.
“ Oh, thou belovèd of the all-loving God,
“ Oh, saint,” I said, “ whose words are quickening showers,
“ And warmth by which I more and more revive ; 120
“ My soul’s capacity is not so deep
“ That it suffice to render grace for grace ;
“ But He who sees and can, the guerdon gives.

- " Well do I see that nothing can content
 " Our intellect, except the Truth Divine, 125
 " For out of Him existeth nothing true.
" It rests in this, as wild beast in its den,
 " Soon as attained, and it can be attained ;
 " For otherwise in vain were each desire.
" Therefore as from the tree the sucker springs, 130
 " Springs from the truth the doubt ; thus nature works,
 " And thus from height to height the top is gained.
" This urges me, this makes my courage bold,
 " Lady, to ask thee, and with reverence due,
 " Still of another truth to me obscure. 135
" This would I know—Can mortal make amends
 " For broken vows by other works of good,
 " Which in your balance shall not wanting prove ?"
Beatrice now looked on me with eyes so full
 Of the sweet sparks of love, and so divine, 140
 That my sight failed me, and I turned away,
And with mine eyes cast down seemed almost lost.

CANTO V.

Beatrice having resolved the Poet's doubts, they pass upwards into the Sphere of Mercury. A multitude of Spirits crowd around Dante, and one of these, in answer to his inquiry, glows with an overpowering light.

- " If in the fire of love to thee I glow
 " With greater brightness than on earth I seemed,
 " So that I steal the courage from thine eyes,
" Be not to wonder stirred, for this proceeds
 " From perfect vision, which, as it perceives, 5
 " Thus moves in measure to the good perceived.
" Clearly I see that even already shines
 " In thine intelligence the eternal light
 " Which alone wakes, once seen, perpetual love ;
" And if aught other thing thy love seduce, 10
 " 'Tis but some trace of that same light divine
 " Ill understood, which here is shining through.
" Thy wish is this,—to know if other works
 " For broken vows can prove of such avail
 " As shall the soul from self-reproach secure ? " 15

Thus Beatrice commenced what now I write,

And like to one who speaketh without pause,

So she continued her divine discourse.

“ The greatest gift God the Creator gives,

“ Of His great bounty, and the most conformed 20

“ To His own goodness, and most prized by Him,

“ Is the unfettered liberty of will,

“ With which his creatures of intelligence

“ All and alone have been and are endowed.

“ Hence thou wilt see by inference therefrom 25

“ How precious is the vow, if it be such,

“ That when thy will consenteth God consents ;

“ Because in compact between God and man

“ The sacrifice is made of that rich gift

“ Of which I speak, and by its proper act. 30

“ What then shall be for compensation given ?

“ This offering used to work some other good,

“ Is but to do good works with stolen coin.

“ Now thou art clear upon the greater point ;

“ But since the Holy Church from vows absolves, 35

“ Seeming at issue with the truth I tell,

“ Thou must at table still some time remain,

“ Because the rigid fibre of thy food

“ For its assimilation needeth help.

“ Let what I now reveal be laid to heart, 40

“ And held in ward, for knowledge hath no power,

“ Without the memory, to make us wise.

- " Unto the essence of this sacrifice
 " Two things are requisite ;—the one is called
 " The Matter of the vow ; the other, Form. 45
 " There is no quittance for the last of these,
 " If not observed, and in respect of this
 " Thou heards't me lately speak in terms precise ;
 " Thus by law absolute the Jews were held
 " To make their offering, though the offering might 50
 " Be changed in nature, as thou well must know.
 " The other, known as Matter of the vow,
 " May still be such that it would be no wrong
 " Though for some other matter it were changed.
 " But on his shoulders let none shift the weight 55
 " By his own choice, unless the lock be turned
 " Or by the white or by the yellow key ;
 " And learn that every change is folly's act,
 " If the omitted thing be not contained,
 " In that assumed as four are in the six. 60
 " Therefore whatever vow weigheth so much
 " By its own worth that every balance sinks,
 " Can be atoned for by no other work.
 " Then let not mortals take a vow in jest ;
 " Be true in faith, nor inconsiderate, 65
 " As Jephthah was at his first offering,
 " Who better far had said, ' I have done ill,'
 " Than keeping plight do worse ; nor be so rash
 " As he, the mighty leader of the Greeks,

- " Whence her fair face Iphigenia mourned, 70
 " Making both wise and foolish weep her woe
 " Who hear this fatal act of worship told.
" Oh, Christians, take more heed unto your ways ;
 " Be not like feathers stirred by every wind ;
 " Think not that every stream will cleanse your souls. 75
" Ye have the Testaments the old and new,
 " And the Great Pastor of the Church for guide ;
 " This is enough to make salvation yours.
" If evil passions other things suggest,
 " Then be ye men, and not insensate beasts, 80
 " So that the Jews among you shall not laugh.
" Be ye not like unto the lamb which leaves
 " The mother's milk, and with its shallow sport
 " In frolic gambol trifles with itself."
To me spake Beatrice as now I write, 85
 And then she turned with eager longing round
 Where seemed the world most quick with life and light.
Her stillness and her change of look imposed
 Silence upon my eager spirit's wish,
 For questions new were ready on my tongue. 90
And like an arrow which the target strikes
 Before vibration ceases in the cord,
 So we shot upwards to the second realm.
Here with such gladness did my lady glow,
 Passing into the light of the new heaven, 95
 That with a double splendour shone the star.

And if it thus were changed and seemed to smile,
 Then how much more an essence such as I,
 Both in my soul and body full of change !
 As in a pond of water still and pure, 100
 The fishes dart, where cometh from without
 That which to them hath semblance of their food,
 So did I see a thousand glorious souls
 Towards us draw, and from them all I heard,
 “ Lo, some one comes our blessings to enlarge ! ” 105
 And soon as each had near to us approached,
 Full seemed the spirit with the sweet delight
 Which forth from it in brightest radiance flowed.
 Ah, reader ! what my pen commences here
 Were it to go no farther, think how great 110
 Would be thine anxious craving more to know ;
 Then judge thou by thyself of my desire
 To hear those souls of their condition tell
 So soon as to mine eyes made manifest.
 “ Oh, man beloved, to whom the grace is given 115
 “ To see the saints triumphant on their thrones,
 “ Before thine earthly warfare hath its close,
 “ With that glad light through heaven’s expanse diffused
 “ We are inflamed ; if then it be thy wish,
 “ Clear up thy doubts, and take thy pleasure full.” 120
 Thus spake to me one of those spirits blest ;
 And after it, then Beatrice—“ Speak, speak ;
 “ Fear not, but speak ; believe in them as gods.”

“ Clearly I see how thou hast made a nest

“ In thine own light, which streameth from thine eyes, 125

“ For there it flashes as if lit by smiles ;

“ But who thou art I know not, nor why placed,

“ Thou honoured soul ! in that one orb of heaven

“ Most veiled from mortals by the solar rays.”

This I addressed directly to the light

130

Which first did speak to me, and it became

In glory brighter than it yet had been ;

And like the sun who in excess of light

Himself conceals, when by his heat dissolved

The vapours flee, which formed his tempering veil, 135

So with more joy exulting was concealed

In its own brightness that most blessed form,

And wholly thus eclipsed, its answer came

As in the song which follows shall be sung.

CANTO VI.

The Spirit of the Emperor Justinian addresses Dante. He narrates the glorious history and deeds of the Roman Eagles. Mercury is described as the abode of those souls whose object in life had been immortal glory.

"After great Constantine his eagle flew,
 "Meeting the course of heaven, it followed once
 "Behind the hero who Lavinia won.
 "Two hundred years and more the bird divine
 "In the far east of Europe had its home,
 "Near to the mountain which had sent it forth ;
 "And under shadow of its sacred wings
 "There ruled the world, and thus from hand to hand
 "By law of change imperial came to me.
 "Cæsar I was, Justinian I am,
 "Who, by the Spirit moved, whom now I know,
 "Laws useless and superfluous swept away ;
 "And ere the mighty work my soul engrossed,
 "One nature in the Saviour Christ I knew,
 "No more, and with such faith I was content ;

- “ But blessèd Agapetus, pastor chief
“ Of Holy Church, to the faith true and pure
“ My soul directed by his saintly words.
“ And I believed, and the great truth he preached
“ Made me see clearly, as thou seest well 20
“ In every opposite the false and true.
“ So soon as in the Church’s faith I trod,
“ God, by His grace, the inspiration gave
“ For the great work, and then I plunged therein.
“ My Belisarius led mine armèd host, 25
“ Which by high heaven was in such favour held,
“ The sign was clear my duty lay in rest.
“ To thy first question thus my answer comes
“ Unto its close, but ’tis in nature such
“ I am constrained somewhat to add thereto, 30
“ That thou mayest judge how small the amount of right
“ Against the holy ensign either moves
“ Friends who uphold, or enemies who oppose.
“ Behold how great the valour which hath made
“ Reverence its due, and its beginning took 35
“ When Pallas died to give its empire birth.
“ Thou knowest well that Alba was its home
“ Three hundred years and more, until the time
“ When three opposed to three for mastery fought.
“ Its deeds thou knowest from the Sabine rape 40
“ Down to Lucretia’s woe—seven royal reigns—
“ Conquering the tribes which held surrounding sway.

- " Thou knowest its triumphs when the famous men
 " Of Rome made Brennus, Pyrrhus own its power,
 " And fluttered other princes, other leagues ; 45
 " By which Torquatus, Quintius who was named
 " From hair untrimmed, the Decii, Fabii,
 " That fame acquired which gladly I enshrine.
 " It struck to earth the proud Arabian host,
 " Which in the train of Hannibal o'ercame 50
 " The rugged Alps, from which the Po descends.
 " Beneath it triumphed in their flush of youth
 " Pompey and Scipio ; and the hill which swells
 " Above thy birthplace felt its fierce assault.
 " Then near the time when the whole host of heaven 55
 " Willed upon earth its own celestial peace,
 " Cæsar, by Rome's command, the eagle bore ;
 " And what it did from Var unto the Rhine
 " Those rivers know, the Saone, Isere, and Seine,
 " And every vale which helps to swell the Rhone. 60
 " What it then did when from Ravenna forth
 " It passed the Rubicon, was flight so swift
 " It may not followed be by pen or tongue.
 " It rolled its legions to the land of Spain ;
 " Then to Dyracchium ; then Pharsalia struck, 65
 " So that the tepid Nile perceived the blow.
 " Antandro and the Simois whence it sprung
 " Once more it saw, and where great Hector slept ;
 " Next upon Ptolemy it fiercely flew ;

- " Then upon Juba like the lightning flashed, 70
 " And after that swept back towards your west,
 " Where rolled the echoes of great Pompey's trump.
 " The deeds it did with him who bore it next,
 " Brutus and Cassius bark and howl in hell,
 " And Modena mourneth and Perugia grieves. 75
 " Sad Cleopatra weeps its conquering flight,
 " And from its terror fleeing, in the asp
 " Took to her bosom swift and gloomy death.
 " Augustus bore it to the Red Sea shore ;
 " With him it brought the world such peace profound, 80
 " That upon Janus closed the double gates.
 " But what I say of the imperial bird,
 " What it had done, what it was yet to do
 " Throughout the period of its temporal reign,
 " Appear but trifling and inglorious all, 85
 " If when it lay in the third Cæsar's grasp
 " We look with eye clear and undimmed by sin ;
 " For God's great justice which my word inspires
 " Gave it, while held by him of whom I speak,
 " The glory to take vengeance for His wrath. 90
 " Now here with double wonder list to me :
 " Then it took wing with Titus to avenge
 " The divine vengeance for the olden crime.
 " And when the Lombard hate had fixed its teeth
 " On Holy Church, beneath its conquering wings 95
 " The mighty Charles made speed to bring it aid.

- " Now mayest thou judgment form of what be they
 " Whom lately I accused, and what their crimes,
 " Who are the very cause of all your woes.
 " The golden lilies here the eagle flout, 100
 " There it is made a party use to serve ;
 " 'Tis hard to say which hath the greater blame.
 " Let then the Ghibellines their ends pursue
 " Under another banner ; this one flies
 " With bated wing where justice is forgot ; 105
 " And the new Charles, let him not pluck it down
 " By his own Guelphs, but let him fear the claws
 " Which from a nobler prey have torn the spoils.
 " Many a time ere this the sons have wept
 " Their father's crime, and it is past belief 110
 " That for the lilies God His eagle change-
 " This little planet is made beautiful
 " By righteous spirits, who have worked in life
 " That fame and honour they might leave behind ;
 " And when our wishes fixed on these o'erpass 115
 " The bounds of right, then must the flame of love
 " Ascend less quickly and less true to heaven.
 " But in the apportionment of our rewards
 " To our deserts, part of our joy is this,
 " We never find them more nor less than just. 120
 " Thus divine justice tempers so in us
 " Our soul's affections, that we lack the power
 " To turn ourselves to any wickedness.

- “ As various voices make sweet harmony,
“ So diverse glories in our earthly life 125
“ Produce sweet concord in these holy spheres.
“ And in this planet, this celestial pearl,
“ Shineth the light of Romeo, who received
“ For work both good and great a guerdon vile.
“ But the Provençals who the injustice did 130
“ Had little boast. Ah, wretched path is his
“ Who finds his evil in another’s good !
“ Four daughters, each of them a Royal Queen,
“ Had Raymond Berenger ; and this the work
“ Of Romeo, strange in country, poor in blood ; 135
“ Yet was his master moved by envious words
“ To claim a full account from this just man,
“ Who had assigned him twelve for every ten.
“ And so he went away worn out and poor ;
“ And had this world but known the noble heart 140
“ Which begged for very life a crust of bread,
“ The praise it gives him would be double praise.”

CANTO VII.

New doubts arise in Dante's mind respecting the redemption of man, and the nature and mode of this redemption. Beatrice explains the mighty mystery, and convinces the Poet of God's high justice.

Hosannah sanctus Deus Sabaoth

Superillustrans claritate tua

Felices ignes horum malahoth !

Thus, turning to its own celestial whirl,

That elect spirit, on which twofold light

5

Redoubling fell, appeared to me to sing ;

And it and all moved in their starry dance,

And then like very swiftly flying sparks

Were in an instant in the distance lost.

Doubt still beset me. Speak to her, I said ;

10

(Unto myself I said) speak, speak to her

Who with such drops of sweetness calms the thirst.

But that great reverence which so masters me

Even at the very utterance of her name,

Inclined my head as one who courteth sleep.

15

- Short time did Beatrice such doubt permit,
 For thus she spake, all radiant with a smile,
 Such as to make man happy even in fire—
 “ By my unerring judgment I perceive
 “ Thy thought is this, ‘ The vengeance being just, 20
 “ How can it justly punishment deserve ?’
 “ But soon thy mental problem I shall solve ;
 “ Then listen thou, for unto thee my words
 “ Shall of a mighty doctrine make the gift.
 “ For not permitting to his will a check 25
 “ For his own good, that man who was not born
 “ Himself condemning all his race condemned ;
 “ Wherefore mankind in fatal sickness lay
 “ From deadly error, and for ages long,
 “ Till God’s most Blessed Word was pleased to come, 30
 “ Where human nature, alienate by sin
 “ From its Creator, in Himself He took
 “ By the sole act of His eternal love.
 “ Now to my reasoning give thy closest thought ;
 “ This human nature to its Maker joined 35
 “ Was at the first created good and pure,
 “ But by its own sole fault was banished forth
 “ From Paradise, because it turned aside
 “ From Him, the way, the very truth, the life.
 “ Thus, then, the punishment the Cross imposed, 40
 “ If measured by the nature Christ assumed,
 “ More justly than all other fixed its sting ;

- “ Whilst also none was ever so unjust,
“ Having regard unto the Sufferer's self,
“ With whom this human nature was conjoined. 45
“ From one act, therefore, sprang effects diverse ;
“ For God and Jewry in one death rejoiced,
“ Which made the earth to quake and opened heaven.
“ No longer then let language seem obscure,
“ When it is said that vengeance, although just, 50
“ Called down the vengeance of a righteous court.
“ But now I see how straightened is thy mind,
“ Passing from thought to thought within a net,
“ From which with keen desire thou seek'st escape.
“ Thou thinkest—‘ What I hear I comprehend, 55
“ ‘ But this is hidden, Why should God have willed
“ ‘ By means like this that man should be redeemed ?’
“ Brother, this deep decree sepulchred lies
“ Unto the eyes of all in whom the soul
“ Hath not been ripened in the flame of love. 60
“ But because this is the great point to which
“ Many their eyes direct, though few discern,
“ I will now tell the glory of the means.
“ The Divine Goodness, who repels the touch
“ Of envy, being love Himself, so shines, 65
“ That all creation owns the blest display.
“ That which directly emanates from Him
“ Liveth for ever, for there is no loss
“ Of His impression where His seal is set.

- “ That which His goodness showers directly down 70
“ Is wholly free, for it disdains control
“ By any power of secondary cause.
- “ What most to Him conformed He loveth most,
“ For love divine, which sheds its rays on all,
“ Shines brightest upon that most like Himself. 75
- “ To hold these states and gifts is privileged
“ The human creature, and if one shall fail,
“ From his pre-eminence he needs must stoop.
- “ Sin can alone the free man make a slave,
“ And blot the likeness of the Good Supreme, 80
“ For it makes dim in him the light divine.
- “ And to his dignity is no return
“ If he compensate not the void of sin
“ By pains proportioned to his guilty joys.
- “ Your human nature, when all men had sinned 85
“ In the first seed, those privileges lost
“ As it had lost the joys of Paradise ;
- “ Nor could recover them, if in thy mind
“ Thou ponderest carefully, by any means
“ Except by passing one of these two ways ; 90
- “ Either must God Himself have pardon given,
“ Of His own mercy, or must man himself
“ Have for his madness expiation made.
- “ Fix now thine eye within the abyss profound
“ Of the eternal counsels, and as far 95
“ As thou art able hold thou to my words.

- “ Man in this finite state hath not wherewith
“ To make atonement, for he cannot reach
“ In his obedient humbleness so low
“ As he in disobedience thought to rise, 100
“ And this explaineth why he is debarred
“ From power to make atonement for himself.
“ Therefore the need that God by His own way
“ Should man restore unto his perfect life
“ By mercy, or by this and justice joined. 105
“ But as the work gives ever most delight
“ Unto the workman when it sheweth most
“ The goodness of the heart from which it springs,
“ God’s goodness, which imprinteth all His works,
“ Was pleased in His procedure to make use 110
“ Of both these ways to raise up fallen man ;
“ From the first day of time to the last night
“ Was never work so mighty and sublime
“ By either means performed, nor ever shall.
“ For richer was God’s love in that He took 115
“ Man’s nature, that redemption might be man’s,
“ Than if alone His mercy had forgiven.
“ And insufficient were all other ways
“ Justice to meet, had not the Son of God
“ In great humility been born of flesh. 120
“ Therefore thy every wish to satisfy,
“ I now return to make one point more clear,
“ That as I see, so thou mayest see them all.

- " Thou sayest, ' I see the air, I see the fire,
 " ' Water, and land, and all combined of these, 125
 " ' Come to corruption, their existence brief ;
" ' And yet these things were all created things,
 " ' Whence, if the words I spake have been the truth,
 " ' They ought from all corruption to be free.'
" The angels, brother, and the region pure 130
 " In which thou art, truly created were
 " In all perfection as they now exist ;
" But then the elements which thou hast named,
 " And every combination formed by them,
 " Owe their existence to created power. 135
" The matter elementary was from God,
 " From God the generative power derived
 " Which the stars have that circling move around.
" The ray and movement of these holy lights,
 " By their potential energy, educe 140
 " The soul of every beast and every plant.
" But Infinite Goodness breathes in us the soul
 " Directly from Himself, and to Himself
 " Constrains its love, henceforth its whole desire.
" And thus by reasoning thou canst also prove 145
 " Man's resurrection, if thou wilt reflect
 " How mortal flesh was then created when
" In the beginning the first pair were made."

CANTO VIII.

Dante ascends into the sphere of Venus. There he encounters the spirits of those who on earth were overmastered by their amorous passions. He meets with the shade of Carlo Martello, who clears up some of his doubts and difficulties.

The world was wont in pagan perilous times
To deem that sensual love was spread abroad
By Venus in the third Epicycle turning ;
Therefore did men not only honour her
With sacrifices and with votive prayers 5
In the old time, in the old error sunk ;
But not less honoured Cupid and Diōne ;
The mother this, and that the Cyprian's son,
And he, they said, nestled in Dido's breast.
And so from her who this beginning stirs 10
The pagans took the name they gave that star
Which now in front, now following, woos the sun.
Of my ascent to it I nothing felt ;
But that I was within it proof enough
My lady gave, for lovelier she became. 15

And as in flame the brighter spark is seen,
 And as in music voice from voice is known,
 When one at rest, the others rise and fall,
 I in this light saw other lustrous lamps
 Moving around with swiftness more or less, 20
 Methinks proportioned to their vision blest.
 Winds ne'er descended from the frigid clouds
 Or visible or not, however swift,
 Which had not seemed in movement checked and slow,
 Compared with those celestial lights now seen 25
 Approaching towards us, ceasing from the whirl
 Moved at the first by the high seraphim ;
 And from the lips of those who were in front
 So sweet *Hosannah* sounded, ever since
 Much have I longed to hear it once again. 30
 Then one came nearer to us, and it said,
 Speaking alone—" Most ready are we all
 " To do thy will that we may give thee joy.
 " With the celestial princes here we roll,
 " One in our sphere, our movement, our desire ; 35
 " Of these on earth already thou hast said,
 " *Ye who the third heaven by your reason rule ;*
 " And we so lovingly would make thee glad,
 " A little while to rest were sweet to us."
 After mine eyes with questioning glance were turned 40
 With reverence to my lady, and from hers
 Had gained contentment and assurance full,

I turned them towards the light from which had come
 So large a promise, and with voice attuned
 To tender wishes, "Who art thou?" I said. 45
 Ah, great and glorious did its lustre grow,
 As a new rapture wakened at my words,
 And to its gladness brought increase of joy!
 Thus glorified it spake—"The world was mine
 "But for a little space; had this been more, 50
 "Much evil yet to be had never been.
 "I am concealed in my own blessedness,
 "Which radiates around me; I am hid
 "As is the insect in its silken robe.
 "Thou lovedst me well, and for it had good cause; 55
 "But had I longer lived, I would have shewn
 "Not the leaves only but the fruits of love.
 "That region on the left confined and washed
 "By the mixed water of the Rhone and Sorgue,
 "Looked for me as its lord, at the due time; 60
 "And that Ausonian promontory, crowned
 "By Bari, Gaeta, and Cortona's towers,
 "From Trento and the Verde's ocean mouths.
 "The crown already on my forehead glanced
 "Of that fair country which the Danube laves, 65
 "After it passes from its German banks;
 "And beautiful Trinacria, steeped in gloom
 "(Not from Typhœus dead, but sulphurous airs)
 "Between Pachynum and Pelorus' cape,

- " Over which Eurus sweeps with mightiest rage, 70
 " Had still been subject to those royal kings,
 " Sprung through my blood from Rudolph and from Charles,
 " If rulers' tyranny, which ever wakes
 " The rage of subject peoples, had not roused
 " Palermo's cry implacable of death. 75
 " And if my brother had this truth foreseen,
 " Then Catalonia's poverty and greed
 " He would have shunned and thus been spared the offence ;
 " For truly he himself, or one for him,
 " Must have a care, lest on his laden bark 80
 " Already heavy, heavier load be placed.
 " His nature, changed from liberal to churl,
 " Would have required such ministers as cared
 " For something more than their own money chests."—
 " Since I believe the gladness deep with which 85
 " Thy words, oh mighty prince, my soul inspire,
 " Here where all good hath origin and end,
 " Is seen by thee, as by myself perceived ;
 " It is more pleasant, and still more because
 " Its truth thou seest in the face of God. 90
 " Glad thou hast made me, and now make me wise,
 " Since by thy words thou hast instilled a doubt :
 " How can sweet seeds produce a bitter plant ?"
 In answer thus he spake—" If I have power
 " To shew thee one deep truth, then shall thine eye 95
 " Be made to see what lieth now concealed.

" That God who rules the realm thou climbest now,
 " And all contenteth, with the power endows
 " Of His own providence those mighty spheres ;
 " And not alone hath the All-perfect mind 100
 " For every creature due provision made,
 " But also what stability demands ;
 " For whatsoever speedeth from this bow
 " Reaches unerringly the end foreseen,
 " As to the mark the arrow wings its flight. 105
 " If this were not, that heaven thou passest through
 " Would in its workings such effects produce
 " As would be ruin and not building up ;
 " And this can not be, if the angelic minds
 " Which move those stars no imperfection have, 110
 " And He to make them perfect have not failed.
 " Will'st thou this truth shall still be clearer made ?"
 " No," said I ; " for impossible it seems
 " That Nature in her needful work can fail."
 He added then—" Say now, would it be worse 115
 " If man were not a citizen on earth ?"
 I answered—" Yes ; nor need I seek the cause :
 " And can he truly be, if in men's lives
 " They do not each his different office serve ?
 " No, if in this your master writes the truth." 120
 So by deduction to this point he came,
 And then concluded—" It must follow, then,
 " Men's inclinations vary in their roots ;

- “ Therefore a Solon one, a Xerxes one,
“ One a Melchisedec is born, and one 125
“ Who lost his son by too presumptuous flight.
“ The virtue of the circling heavens, and seal
“ To stamp the mortal wax, does well its work,
“ But makes no difference between house and house.
“ Hence it arrives that Esau is so far 130
“ Apart from Jacob ; and from stock so vile
“ Sprang Romulus, whom Fame makes son of Mars.
“ Nature in genesis would ever move
“ In the same path progenitors have trod,
“ Were it not checked by Providence divine. 135
“ What once was hidden now thou seest clear ;
“ But since thy knowledge makes me to rejoice,
“ I throw a corollary over all.
“ If nature findeth fortune with herself
“ In discord, then like any other seed 140
“ In clime unsuitable, it always fails.
“ And if the world below would ponder well
“ On the foundation nature sets to each,
“ And build on this, a nobler race were men.
“ But to a life religious him ye turn, 145
“ Him who was born to wear the girded sword,
“ And make him king who is more fit to preach,
“ So that your footsteps wander from the road.”

CANTO IX.

Dante encounters the shades of Cunizza, sister of Ezzelin da Romano; and of Folchetto, of Marseilles. The glorious light of Rahab of Jericho is also made manifest to him. The Poet closes the Canto with bitter words against the Pope and Cardinals.

After thy Charles, oh, beautiful Clemenza !

Had cleared my doubts, he told to me the frauds

Which should in time bring sorrow to his seed ;

But said—" Keep silence ; let the years roll on ; "

So that I may not speak, save only this,

5

That woe well earned shall follow on your wrongs.

And now the spirit of that holy light

Turned to the source whence all its fulness came,

That Good sufficient in Himself for all.

Ah, blinded souls, ah, impious and vain,

10

Who close your hearts to this majestic good,

Turning your thoughts to very vanity !

Lo ! now another of those lustrous lights

Towards me looked, and its sweet wish to please

Was in its outward brilliancy revealed.

15

The eyes of Beatrice, which still were fixed

On me as formerly, with dear assent

Gave willing liberty to my desire.

“ Ah ! be thou pleased to satisfy my wish,

“ Thou spirit blest,” I said, “ and give me proof

20

“ That all my thoughts I can reflect in thee.”

On which the spirit, yet to me unknown,

From the great depths whence rose its former song,

Complied with air of very courteous joy—

“ In Italy’s foul land, and in that part

25

“ Which lies between Rialto and the springs

“ Whence the Piavè and the Brenta flow,

“ Rises a hill, but to no mighty height,

“ From which descended once a lurid torch,

“ Bringing to all the region dire dismay.

30

“ From the same stock we came, both It and I.

“ Cunizza was my name, and here I shine,

“ Bound by the influence of this planet’s light.

“ But I with gladness to myself excuse

“ The cause which dooms me here, and little heed

35

“ That to your ignorant world it seemeth strange.

“ Of this most lucent, this most precious gem

“ Of our own heaven, and which is nearest me,

“ Great fame remains, and ere it shall have passed,

“ This hundredth year shall its fifth cycle roll ;

40

“ See then how man should labour to excel,

“ Since such a second life may crown the first !

- " But 'tis not so the present rabble think,
 " Who 'twixt the Adige and Tagliamento dwell,
 " Nor hath affliction their repentance wrought. 45
 " But soon shall Padua change to crimson dye
 " The marshy waters which Vicenza bathe,
 " Because her sons are headstrong against right.
 " And where Cagnano and the Silè join,
 " He lords it proudly, and with head aloft, 50
 " For whom the net is weaving even now.
 " Feltra hath yet to weep the perfidy
 " Of its foul pastor, and so shameless he,
 " For one so vile ne'er yawned Bolsena's tower.
 " No wine-vat would be large enough to hold 55
 " The flowing measure of Ferrara's blood,
 " And weary he who ounce by ounce should weigh
 " What that most liberal priest shall give in proof
 " Of party spirit ; and such gifts accord
 " With all the living customs of the land. 60
 " Above are mirrors, and you call them thrones,
 " Whence upon us a God of judgment shines,
 " So that our prophesies are words of truth."
 Here she was silent, and the semblance had
 Of turning to some other thought, anew 65
 Plunged in the whirl as she had been before.
 The other gladsome spirit known ere now
 Was as a thing of very beauty's self,
 A balas ruby which the sun has struck.

- Gladness in heaven maketh a brighter light 70
 As joy makes smiles on earth ; but hell beneath
 By outer shadow marks its inner woe.
 " God seeth all, thy vision lives in His,"
 I said, " oh, blessed soul ! so that no wish
 " Which comes from Him can be to thee obscure. 75
 " Therefore thy voice, which brings delight to heaven
 " With the same song of the bright seraphim,
 " Who with six wings make to themselves a hood,
 " Why doth it not yield peace to my desire ?
 " I would have waited not for thy request, 80
 " Could I to thy thought pierce, as thou to mine."—
 " The mightiest valley in which rolls the sea,
 " Except that ocean which the earth surrounds,"
 Thus unto utterance at length it waked,
 " Between opposing shores, against the sun 85
 " Stretcheth so far, the arc, which at the first
 " Horizon is, meridian becomes.
 " I was a dweller on that valley's shore
 " 'Twixt Ebro and the Macra, short in course,
 " Dividing Genoese from Tuscan land. 90
 " In a like parallel of East and West
 " Lie Bragia and the land from which I sprung,
 " Whose Port once reeked with its own children's blood.
 " That people call me Folco unto whom
 " My name was known, and the celestial sphere 95
 " Which once impressed me is by me impressed ;

- " For Dido burnt not with so hot a flame,
 " Grieving Sichæus and Creusa both,
 " As I, so long as fitting to my years ;
 " Nor Phillis, Thracia's Queen, who was betrayed 100
 " By Demophoön, nor great Hercules
 " When Iolè held him captive in her heart.
 " Yet we repent not here, but we rejoice,
 " Not in the sin—that touches us no more—
 " But in that Power who sees and all ordains. 105
 " Here we the art contemplate which adorns
 " Such great effects, and the wise end for which
 " The heavens above control the earth below.
 " But that they rest in satisfaction full,
 " Thy heart's desires, which in this sphere are born, 110
 " It needeth I should somewhat further speak.
 " Thou wouldest know who dwelleth in this light
 " Which glittering near me sparkles as the ray
 " When the sun shimmers in the limpid wave.
 " Learn then that there within resteth in peace 115
 " Rahab, and of our choir she formeth one,
 " And, in the highest, makes her impress here.
 " Unto this sphere which terminates the cone
 " Which the earth's shadow makes, first of all souls
 " She was assumed when Christ triumphant rose. 120
 " Fitting it was some orb celestial held
 " This trophy of that mighty victory won
 " By the outstretching of two wounded hands,

- " For she brought help to the first glorious move
 " Of Joshua towards the Holy Land, 125
 " To which the Pope giveth but scanty thought.
" Thy city, which an offshoot is of him
 " Who to his master first the shoulder turned,
 " And from whose envy sprung such bitter woe,
" Coins and makes current that accursèd flower 130
 " Which has led sheep and lamb alike astray,
 " For of the shepherd it has made a wolf.
" Thus are the Gospels, all the Fathers, left
 " Deserted, and the Canon law alone
 " So studied, page and margin give the proof. 135
" The Pope and Cardinals make their study this,
 " Their thoughts go never forth to Nazareth,
 " Where the Archangel Gabriel spread his wings.
" But soon the Vatican and other spots
 " Of Rome most holy, which had been the tombs 140
 " Of the Church Militant in Peter's train,
" Shall from the foul adultery be free."

CANTO X.

Description of the order in which God created the universe. The Poet ascends into the Fourth Heaven, or that of the Sun. In this are the souls of those who were learned in Divinity. Many glorious spirits are pointed out to him by St. Thomas Aquinas.

Beholding in His Son and with the love
Which in eternity proceeds from both,
The one the ineffable Almighty,
Makes all that mind revolves or sense perceives
In such fair order, that whoe'er observes 5
Must have some taste of Him so wise and good.
Lift then, oh reader ! to the wheels sublime
Thy gaze with me direct towards that part
Where the two movements seem to interfere,
And there with love and awe survey the work 10
Of the great Workman, by Himself so loved
His eye is ever in and o'er it all.
And lo ! how now from the equator swerves
The oblique circle which the planets bear,
To shed their influence on a craving world ; 15

And if their pathway were not so inclined,
Much heavenly influence would be shed in vain,
And nature's force be almost dead on earth ;
And if the obliquity were more or less
From the right line, mighty were then the loss 20
Of order cosmical to earth and heaven.
Now, oh, my reader, on thy quiet seat
Think closely on the foretaste I have given,
If thou would gladness know ere come fatigue ;
Thy table I have spread, thyself now feed, 25
For all my thoughts and cares are here reclaimed
By that deep matter of which I am scribe.
The mightiest of great Nature's ministers,
Which with celestial virtue stamps the world,
And measures with its light the passing hours, 30
Joined with that part of heaven, of which we spake
Somewhat before, along the spirals rolled
In which it sheweth earlier day by day.
And I was with it, but my upward flight
Was not perceived, more than a man perceives 35
The coming of a thought before it comes.
For Beatrice is with me, and my guide
From good to better with such rapid act,
That it can make no measurement in time.
How lucent in their glory needs must be 40
Those in the sun, where I had entrance found,
Not from their colour but their glittering light !

Though I may call on genius, custom, art,
I cannot tell what may not be conceived,
But faith and hope to see may still be ours. 45
And if our weak imaginations quail
Before such lofty vision, marvel not,
For higher than the sun eye never reached.
Such was the orb in order fourth from Him,
The all-sufficing Father, showing how 50
He breathes the Spirit and begets the Son.
And Beatrice said—" Give thanks, give thanks to Him,
" Sun of the angels, who hath lighted thee
" By His pure grace to this material sun."
No mortal ever felt devotion's call 55
So strong, none ever gave himself to God
With such a ready fulness of his heart,
As I, upon the utterance of these words,
And then on Him so centred all my love,
That Beatrice by oblivion was eclipsed. 60
Yet it displeased her not, for she so smiled,
That in the splendour of her smiling eyes
My single purpose turned to many things.
Spirits more bright and dazzling I beheld
Of us make centre, of themselves a ring, 65
Sweeter in voice than lucent to the eye.
Latona's daughter thus encircled seems
When vapours make at times so thick the air,
It holds the colours which the halo form.

In that fair court of heaven from whence I come, 70
 Unnumbered jewels rich and rare are found,
 Such as may never pass beyond that realm ;
And those high spirits' song was one of these ;
 He who hath not the wings for such a flight
 Must look as from the dumb for news from heaven. 75
Then, after singing thus, those glowing suns
 Three times around us in a circle wheeled,
 Like stars revolving near the fixèd poles ;
They seemed like girls not ceasing from the dance,
 But who in silence pause with listening ear, 80
 Till the new notes are gathered by the sense ;
And forth from one of them this utterance came—
 “ Because the ray of grace, whence wakes the fire
 “ Of real love, and which by loving grows,
“ In thee redoubled with such glory shines, 85
 “ That it conducts thee upwards by a stair
 “ Which none descends who does not mount again ;
“ Whoe'er should wine refuse from his own flask
 “ To quench thy thirst, would no more freedom have
 “ Than a stream barred from flowing to the sea. 90
“ Thou wouldst know what plants supply the flowers
 “ Which form this wreath that winds in ravishment
 “ Round her who makes thee strong to rise to heaven.
“ I was a lamb of that most holy flock
 “ Which sainted Dominic by pathways led, 95
 “ Where grace matures if vanities are shunned.

- " He who is nearest me and on the right,
 " My brother was and master—Albert he,
 " And of Cologne, and of Acquinum I.
 " If thou wouldst certain know of all the rest, 100
 " Follow my speech with an observant look,
 " Travelling the circuit of this blessed wreath.
 " This other splendour streams from Gratian's joy,
 " Who sought to reconcile the double law,
 " And brought contentment to the courts of heaven. 105
 " He near me who our company adorns,
 " That Peter was, who to the Holy Church,
 " Like the poor widow, gave what he possessed.
 " That light, the fifth and fairest of us all,
 " Flows from such love, that the whole nether world 110
 " Craves with great longing to be told of him.
 " Within it dwells that mind sublime, so full
 " Of every knowledge, that if truth be truth,
 " A second such on earth shall never rise.
 " Nearer to us behold that taper's light 115
 " Which in the flesh possessed such views profound
 " Of the angelic ministry and state.
 " And in that lesser light he radiates joy,
 " The great defender of the Christian faith,
 " Whose writings quickened St. Augustine's pen. 120
 " Now if thou make thine eye of thought to pass
 " From light to light in order of my praise,
 " The eighth becomes the thirst of thy desire.

- “ Here in fruition of the Good Supreme
“ Rests that most holy soul who maketh known 125
“ The world’s deceits to him who wills to hear.
“ The body, once its veil, sepultured lies
“ In Ciel-d-Oro, and from martyrs’ pains
“ And from earth’s exile to this peace he came.
“ More distant, lo ! radiates the fervent light 130
“ Of Isidore, Ricardo, and of Bede,
“ In speculation something more than man.
“ This one from whom thine eyes towards me turn
“ Lamp of a spirit is, whose grievous thought
“ Made him think death too laggard in its pace. 135
“ This is of Sigier, the eternal soul
“ Who, when he lectured in the straw-spread street,
“ Invidious truths by dialectic proved.”
So as a clock which calleth unto prayer,
That time in which the spouse of God awakes 140
To sing the matin love she bears her Lord,
Hither and thither makes the clapper strike,
Sounding—tin, tin—and with such dulcet note,
That every prayerful spirit swells with love ;
Thus did I see this glorious wheel move round, 145
And voice gave answering harmony to voice
In time and sweetness, such as no one knows
Save there alone where joy eternal reigns.

CANTO XI.

St. Thomas Aquinas perceiving doubts in the mind of Dante proceeds to enlighten him. He narrates the Angelic life of St. Francis d' Assisi.

Oh, care insensate of the race of man,
How faulty is the reasoning and how weak
Which makes thy wings droop grovelling o'er the earth !
Some were engrossed with law, with medicine some,
Some made the holy priesthood their pretence, 5
And some by force and some by sophisms ruled,
Some lived by frauds, and some by civil charge,
Some in the pleasures of the flesh were sunk
And surfeit-weary, some were drowned in sloth ;
Whilst I unloosed from all those earthly things, 10
Was wafted up with Beatrice into Heaven
By such a rich and glorious welcome met.
After each Spirit to the point had turned
Which in the circle was its former place,
It stood as candle in its candlestick. 15

- Then lo ! I heard once more within that light
Which erewhile spake, words as of one who smiled,
And when they came, more vivid grew the flash :
“ As with the ray divine I am inflamed,
“ So in beholding that eternal lamp 20
“ I learn to know thy thoughts and whence they spring.
“ Thou doubttest and it is thy wish to know
“ By language more precise in term and clear
“ Unto thine understanding what I meant,
“ When some time back I said, *Where grace matures ;* 25
“ And, *Second such on earth shall never rise ;*
“ And here 'tis needful we distinguish well.
“ That Providence who rules the universe
“ By His decree eternal, and of which
“ All eyes created fail to pierce the depths, 30
“ That to her well-beloved she might come
“ The spouse of Him, who with a mighty cry
“ Signed her betrothal with His sacred blood,
“ Safely and also for increase of faith,
“ Two captains for her services assigned, 35
“ Who should be guides to her on either side.
“ The one was all seraphic in his love,
“ The other by his wisdom was on earth
“ A very glory of cherubic light.
“ Of one of them I speak, because to both 40
“ Alike the praise applies, it boots not which,
“ For in their works one end they had in view.

- " Between Tupino and the stream which rolls
 " Down from the hill which blest Ubildo chose,
 " A fertile slope on the high mountain hangs ;
" Of this Perugia feels the heat and cold
 " On the side Porta Solè, whilst behind
 " Nocera and Gualdo weep the galling yoke.
" On that steep bank, and where its steepness falls
 " Less than elsewhere, was born to earth a sun
 " As from the Ganges this in summer springs.
" But let not him who speaketh of the place
 " Assisi call it, little this would tell,
 " But call it East, if he would rightly speak.
" He was not yet far distant from his rise,
 " Ere he began to make the world perceive,
 " That in his virtue mighty comfort lay.
" For he yet youthful faced his Father's wrath
 " For her dear sake for whom, even as for death,
 " The gate of pleasure is by none unlocked ;
" And in the presence of the sacred court,
 " *Et coram patre*, took her for his spouse ;
 " And day by day thereafter loved her more.
" She of her first mate widowed lonely sate,
 " Despised one thousand and one hundred years,
 " No one inviting her until he came ;
" Naught it availed that she was fearless found
 " With her Amyclas, at the call of him
 " Who with his terror filled the world entire ;

45

50

55

60

65

- “ Naught it availed that she was true and bold, 70
“ So that when Mary tarried at the foot,
“ With Christ she mounted on the bitter cross.
“ But lest I overmuch my meaning cloud,
“ Francis and Poverty shall henceforth be
“ The names those lovers bear in my discourse. 75
“ Their concord sweet, their aspect glad and calm,
“ Their love which maketh wonder, their sweet looks
“ Became the moving springs of holy thought ;
“ So that the venerable Bernard first
“ Made bare his feet to win so great a peace, 80
“ He ran the course which running still seemed slow.
“ Oh, wealth unknown, oh true, oh real good !
“ Egidius and Sylvester then their feet
“ Bared in the bridegroom's track, so sweet the bride.
“ Then from his house that father, master, moved 85
“ Forth with his wife, and with that family
“ Whose loins the humble cord now cinctured round.
“ No coward shame of heart abased his front
“ At being Peter Bernardonè's son,
“ Nor for an aspect strangely scorned of men. 90
“ But regally his rigid purpose he
“ Declared to Innocent, and had from him
“ The first approval of his holy rule.
“ After the poor and humble more and more
“ Trod in his footsteps, and whose wondrous life 95
“ Would be more worthy of an angel's song.

- “ A second coronet of approval crowned
“ Through Pope Honorius, by the spirit stirred,
“ The holy craving of their leader’s zeal.
“ And after this, urged by the martyr’s thirst, 100
“ In the fierce presence of the Soldan’s pride
“ Christ did he preach, and those who followed Him.
“ And having found the people yet unripe
“ For true conversion, not to work in vain
“ He turned again to pluck Italian fruit. 105
“ On that rough mount which ’twixt the Tiber lies
“ And Arno’s wave, Christ’s final seal of faith
“ He took, and bare two years upon his limbs.
“ When He whose free grace made him so elect
“ Was pleased to waft him to his high reward, 110
“ Which he had earned by his humility,
“ He to his brethren, as his lawful heirs,
“ Commended his dear lady, with command
“ That they should love her with a heart of faith ;
“ And from her bosom that illustrious soul 115
“ Willed its farewell, returning to its home,
“ And for its body willed no other bier.
“ Consider, then, how great must be the man
“ Who was deemed worthy, and companion fit
“ In the right course to guide St. Peter’s bark ; 120
“ And in our patriarch one so great is found,
“ Wherefore whoever follows his behest
“ Must bear a freight of very precious ware.

- " But now for viands new his flocks have waxed
" So full of gluttony, it cannot fail 125
" That over pastures various they must spread.
" And in proportion as his flocks recede,
" And as they wander farther from himself,
" They to the fold with scantier milk return.
" True there be some who still the danger dread, 130
" And to the shepherd cling, but these so few
" That little store of cloth will clothe them all.
" Now if the words I speak be not obscure,
" If thou in hearing hast attentive been,
" If thou recall'st to mind what I have said, 135
" In part at least thy wish must have content,
" For thou wilt see to what my words apply,
" And understand the lesson in these words,
" *That grace matures where vanities are shunned.*"

CANTO XII.

St. Bonaventuro, in this Canto, narrates the glorious life of St. Dominic. Afterwards he points out to Dante and names to him the spirits of many other illustrious Saints.

No sooner had the closing sentence passed
Beyond the utterance of this blessèd flame,
When as a mill the saintly band revolved,
And the full circle was not yet complete
Before another circle closed it in 5
And with it moved, one motion and one song ;
Song, which as much in these their dulcet pipes
Surpassed our singers' and our poets' art,
As the first splendour the reflected ray.
As bend athwart and in the tender clouds 10
Two arches parallel and like in hue,
When Juno to her handmaid gives command,
The one without springing from that within
(Even as the language of that errant nymph
By love consumed, as vapour by the sun), 15

And which unto the nations pressage give,
By the great compact God with Noah made,
That never more should water drown the world ;
Thus of those roses everlasting formed
Wheeled the two garlands round us circling there, 20
Inner and outer, one in act and song.
After the dance and other festal show,
So rich in song, so lustrous in its blaze,
Light rivalling light in sweetness and in joy,
All at one point and with one impulse paused, 25
Just as the eyes which at the moving will
Open and shut by one concurrent act.
From forth the heart of one of these new lights
Issued a voice, and turning whence it came,
I seemed the needle pointing to the north ; 30
And thus it spake—" The love which makes me glow,
" Stirs me to speak of him the other Chief,
" Through whom mine own hath had such honoured words.
" 'Tis right where one is mentioned both should be ;
" As they together fought the Church's fight, 35
" So in conjunction should their glory shine.
" The hosts of Christ, which to be armed afresh
" Cost such a mighty price, with little zeal
" Followed His banner, few and with distrust ;
" When the commander, who eternal rules, 40
" Help to his soldiers in their peril gave,
" Not for their merits but His grace alone ;

- “ And as just told thee, brought his bride the aid
“ Of two high champions, by whose acts and words
“ The erring people might their path regain. 45
- “ In that fair region whence the zephyr blows,
“ Sweet in its breath to open the young leaves,
“ Which bring renewal to Europa’s robe,
“ Not from those shores remote where break the waves,
“ Behind whose waters in its summer course 50
“ The sun from every one at times is hid,
“ Lies Calahorra, city fortunate,
“ Under protection of the mighty shield,
“ On which one lion crouches, one commands.
- “ There was he born, the faithful in his love 55
“ To the faith Christian, and the wrestler saint,
“ Gentle to friends and terrible to foes ;
“ And at creation’s instant so replete
“ With every quickening virtue was his mind,
“ By him yet in her womb his mother spake. 60
- “ When the espousals their fulfilment had
“ At the most holy font ’twixt him and faith,
“ Where each to each a mutual succour vowed ;
“ She who at baptism had the vow confirmed,
“ Saw in her dream the incomparable fruits 65
“ Which from himself and followers were to spring ;
“ And to express by word, what was the fact,
“ From heaven an inspiration gave the name
“ From the possessive of his all in all.

- " The name was Dominic ; of him I speak 70
 " As of a husbandman by Christ elect,
 " Who in His garden should His helper be.
 " True messenger, apostle true of Christ !
 " For the first longing which his soul perceived
 " Was the first counsel which by Christ was given. 75
 " Many a time in silent wakefulness
 " His nurse had found him prostrate on the earth,
 " Seeming to say—' For this it was I came.'
 " Oh, thou his father truly Felix called !
 " Oh, thou his mother true Joannah named, 80
 " If man's interpretation be the truth !
 " Not for world's wealth, for which now mortals crowd
 " The Ostian Cardinal's or Taddeo's trains,
 " But from the love of the true manna's food,
 " In a short time great doctor he became ; 85
 " So he began to watch around the vine,
 " Which with a careless dresser withereth soon ;
 " And at the chair where once the righteous poor
 " Were held more kindly (not its own the fault,
 " But his who sits degenerate thereon), 90
 " Not to dole two or three to keep the six,
 " Not to be named to the first vacant see,
 " *Non decimas quæ sunt pauperum Dei*,
 " Made he request ; but in an erring world
 " License to combat by that seed from which 95
 " These twenty-four encircling plants are sprung.

- “ And then, with doctrine and with will conjoined,
 “ And power pontifical, he took his way,
 “ Strong as a torrent from a mighty source ;
 “ And on the shoots of heresy he struck 100
 “ With his whole might, more fiercely on the place
 “ Whence with most fierceness the resistance came.
 “ From him in after time flowed many streams,
 “ Which o’er the garden Catholic were shed,
 “ So that more flourishing became its plants. 105
 “ If such were one wheel of the two-wheeled car,
 “ In which the holy Church assaults repelled,
 “ And rested conqueror in her civil strife,
 “ Well should the other wheel to thee be known,
 “ Of which Saint Thomas ere my coming here 110
 “ Made the full excellence so clear and full.
 “ But the wheel’s groove, traced by the outer edge
 “ Of its circumference, is abandoned now,
 “ And so the evil is where was the good !
 “ His brotherhood, who walked with step direct 115
 “ Upon his footsteps’ track, are now so changed
 “ They place the toe where the saint placed his heel ;
 “ And soon the ripening harvest shall expose
 “ The evil culture when the tares complain
 “ That in the barn no room is left for them. 120
 “ True it may be that he, who leaf by leaf
 “ Should search our volume, still might find a page
 “ On which to read—‘ I am what I have been.’

- “ But not in Acquasparta, nor Casal,
“ From thence come those who touch the written rule
“ Or to abate its rigour or increase. 126
- “ In me is seen Buonaventura’s soul
“ Of Bagnoregio, who in mighty trusts
“ Made temporal yield to spiritual cares.
- “ Illuminato, Agostino here 130
“ Were the first lowly men who bared the feet,
“ And, cinctured with the cord, were friends of God.
- “ Hugh of St. Victor, too, is here with them,
“ And Peter Mangiador, and he of Spain
“ Whose twelve books make him still a light on earth ;
- “ Nathan the prophet, and that golden-mouth, 136
“ The Metropolitan, Anselm, and he
“ Who turned his mind to teach the leading art ;
- “ Here is Rabanus ; here beside me shines
“ The Abbot Joachim, of Calabrian fame, 140
“ With the great gift of prophesy endowed.
- “ The praise of this great Paladin to speak
“ The Friar Thomas moved me by the zeal
“ Of his own courtesy and loyal words ;
- “ And with me all this company were stirred.” 145

CANTO XIII.

Dance of the glorified Spirits. St. Thomas resolves Dante's second doubt. His profound and holy argument respecting the great wisdom of Solomon. His caution against precipitate judgment.

He who would fully know what now I saw
Let him imagine (and the image hold
While I am speaking, rooted as a rock,)
The fifteen fairest stars by which in space
The heavens are vivified with light so pure 5
That all aerial thickness it subdues ;
Let him the Wain imagine unto which
Our vault of heaven suffices day and night,
So that revolving it is never hid ;
Then let him add the stars which form the mouth 10
Of that horned space which has its central point
Where rolls the axis of the primal sphere ;
And then imagine all these stars to form
Two signs in heaven, like Ariadne's crown,
That hour she felt the icy cold of death ; 15

And one within the other dart its rays,
And both in such a fashion to revolve
That one should seem to come and one to go ;
Then he shall have some shadow of the truth
Of that bright galaxy and double dance, 20
Which moved in circle round my standing place :
For these from earthly wont are just as far
As the dull current of Chiana's stream
Is from the swiftest movement of the spheres.
No pæans there they sang, no Bacchus chant, 25
But Persons three, in Nature one Divine,
And in One Person this and Human joined.
Music and song in their due measure closed,
Those holy lights on us attention fixed,
Happy to pass from loving act to act. 30
Then brake the silence of the blest accord
That light within from which the wondrous life
Of God's poor Bedesman had to me been told,
And said—" Since of the corn one part is threshed,
" Since in the garner now its grain is stored, 35
" Sweet love invites to thresh the other part.
" 'Tis thy belief that in the breast from which
" The rib was drawn to form the beauteous mouth,
" Whose palate cost the world entire so dear,
" And in that breast which by the spear transfixed 40
" Was so sufficient after and before,
" It in the scales outweigheth every sin,

- “ As much as is to human nature given
“ To have of light, was in all fulness breathed
“ By that Almighty power which made them both ; 45
“ Therefore thou wond’rest at the words I spake,
“ What time I told thee, ‘ Second there was none ’
“ To the great soul in the fifth light enclosed.
“ Now let thy mental eye my answer note,
“ And thou shalt see thy credence and my words 50
“ Be in the truth as centre in the round.
“ That which must die, that which no death can know,
“ Is but a radiance of that archetype .
“ Our God gives birth to of His mighty love ;
“ Because that living light which cometh forth . 55
“ From God’s own light, and which is one with Him
“ And with that love which is with them Triune,
“ In goodness makes His rays converging strike,
“ As on so many mirrors, the nine heavens,
“ Himself remaining One eternally. 60
“ To the powers ultimate it then descends
“ So weakened as it sinks from sphere to sphere,
“ It maketh now but what must fade and die,
“ As mere contingencies to be explained
“ As generated things, which are produced 65
“ By heavenly influence, with or without seed.
“ The matter forming them, the hand which moulds
“ Must vary ; therefore by the seal impressed
“ Of the First Mind more or less bright they shine ;

- “ It happens thence that the same tree brings forth 70
“ (Same in the species) fruit both good and bad,
“ And men are born varying in mental power.
“ If wholly perfect were the plastic wax,
“ If power celestial were supreme in strength,
“ Full would be seen the archetypal light. 75
“ But nature ever faileth in the seal,
“ Being in her working like the artist mind,
“ Which knows the art but owns a trembling hand.
“ Yet if the glorious love, the insight clear
“ Of the First Cause the wax dispose and mould, 80
“ Then all perfection truly in it rests.
“ Therefore at first was made our earthly clay
“ In animal perfection wholly pure,
“ Thus was the Virgin's spotless burden made.
“ So thy opinion my approval wins, 85
“ That human nature never yet has been,
“ Nor ever shall, as in those Persons twain.
“ Now if my reasoning did no further go,
“ Why didst thou say then, ‘ Equal he had none ?’
“ So might thy words in questioning commence. 90
“ But that which seemeth dark may be made clear ;
“ Think who he was, think well what moved his choice,
“ When it was said, ‘ What I shall give thee ask.’
“ I have not spoken thus but that thou may
“ Judge well he was a king who wisdom chose, 95
“ To be in all sufficiency a king ;

- " Not this to learn, how many there may be
 " Who move the spheres of heaven, nor if *necesse*
 " With the contingent still *necesse* make ;
 " Nor *si est dare primum motum esse*, 100
 " Nor if within the semicircle's bounds
 " Triangle not right-angled can be made.
 " Hence if thou notest what I said and say,
 " This royal wisdom is the peerless aim
 " At which the arrow of my purpose points. 105
 " And my word '*risen*' to thy mind made clear,
 " Then shalt thou know it reference bears alone
 " To Kings, who many are, though few be good.
 " With this distinction take what I have said,
 " And taken thus it tallies with thy faith 110
 " In the first Parent and in our Beloved.
 " And let this be as lead unto thy feet,
 " That like a weary man thou movest slow
 " To yes or no, when yet not clear thy sight ;
 " For amidst fools he holds the lowest place 115
 " Who grants without distinction or denies,
 " Whichever character the clause may bear ;
 " Therefore it happens that too oft inclines
 " The hasty judgment to the wrong result,
 " Then self-opinion intellect enslaves. 120
 " Worse than in vain he starteth from the shore,
 " For as he went so comes he not again,
 " Who angles for the truth without the art ;

- “ Briso, Melissus, and Parmenides,
“ And many others, give a world-wide proof 125
“ Who travelled on yet whither never knew.
“ So did Sabellius, Arius, and those fools
“ Who were as swords let loose on Holy Writ
“ To turn its verities to false conceits.
“ Let not the peoples then be over bold 130
“ In judging, like the man who sets the price
“ Upon the growing corn ere it be ripe ;
“ For through the winter season have I seen
“ The rose-tree to appearance dead and wild,
“ In summer bear aloft the blooming rose ; 135
“ And I have seen the ship direct and swift
“ Complete its voyage in the open sea
“ And perish at the entrance to the port.
“ And let not Monna Bertha, Ser Martin,
“ Seeing one steal, another offering make, 140
“ Think that they see as in the mind divine,
“ For that one yet may rise and this one fall.”

CANTO XIV.

One of the triumphant Spirits at the request of Beatrice clears up further doubts of the Poet. Beatrice and Dante ascend to the Planet Mars. In the body of this Planet is the appearance of a glorious Cross, around and about which flit the souls of those who have died combating for the Faith.

From centre to circumference or reverse,
Water in rounded vessels is impelled,
As from within we strike, or from without.
Into my thought with sudden fancy came
What I now say, soon as the glorious soul 5
Of saintly Thomas had its utterance closed,
By the similitude which had its birth
In his discourse, and that of Beatrice,
Who after him these words was pleased to speak :
“ This one hath need, though needing not to ask 10
“ Either by voice or even by act of thought,
“ Another truth to search unto its roots.
“ Inform him if the light which now bedecks
“ Your spirit's being, shall with you abide
“ As at the present to eternity ; 15

“ And if it doth remain, then tell him how
“ After your resurrection visible,
“ It shall not power possess to pain the sense.”
As by more ravishment impelled and drawn,
At times the partners in the festive ring, 20
Their voices raise, and gladder movements urge ;
So at this earnest and devout request
The holy circles showed increase of joy
Both in their dance and in their wondrous song.
He, who is sad because men die on earth 25
To live in heaven, hath never here beheld
The full refreshment of the eternal rain.
That One and Two and Three who ever lives
And ever reigns in Three and Two and One,
Not circumscribed, but circumscribing all, 30
Was in sweet chant repeated thrice by each
Of those glad spirits, with such melody,
For every merit it were full reward ;
Within the splendour most divinely bright
Of the inner ring I heard a gentle voice— 35
Perchance the Angel so to Mary spake—
This answer give—“ So long as shall subsist
“ The joys of Paradise, so long our love
“ Shall spread in radiance round this glorious robe.
“ Its brightness shineth as our ardour burns, 40
“ This as our vision grows, and this is clear
“ Just as grace sublimates our feeble powers.

- " When with the glorified and holy flesh
 " We are re-clothed, our person then becomes
 " More beautiful, because it is complete ; 45
 " Therefore the gift of light will gain increase
 " Which the Great Good of His free bounty gives ;
 " Light which enables us to see Himself :
 " Hence must our vision in its clearness grow,
 " Hence grow the ardour which by it is fired, 50
 " Hence brighter grow the ray this sendeth forth.
 " But as the charcoal which gives out the flame,
 " And by its vivid glow so conquers it
 " That its own lucent aspect is sustained,
 " So the great splendour which encircles us, 55
 " Pales at the apparition of the flesh
 " Which always lies sepultured in the earth.
 " Nor can a light so great our senses pain,
 " Because the body's organs shall be strong
 " To hear whatever shall to us be joy." 60
 Both of those radiant choirs so willing seemed
 And prompt to say Amen, their wish it showed
 With their dead bodies to be clothed again ;
 Not for their own sakes only, but perhaps
 For mother's, father's, all they once held dear, 65
 Ere they had yet become eternal flames.
 And lo ! like them in glory, flashed abroad,
 A light above the lights already there
 Like a horizon brightened by the sun !

And as when upward spreads the early night, 70
New starry forms begin to flock the sky,
Now seeming visible, now scarcely seen,
So I began new semblances to see
Of holy essences, which formed a ring
Ranging beyond the other circles twain. 75
Oh, Holy Spirit, thine effulgence true
Breaks with such sudden glory on mine eyes,
They cannot bear it and o'ermastered droop !
But Beatrice so radiant and so fair
Before me shone, amongst those other sights, 80
Which memory holdeth not, must this be left.
So then mine eyes the needful power regained
For upward vision, and myself I saw
Alone with her in more celestial bliss.
I well perceived a loftier height was mine, 85
By the more flaming aspect of the star,
Which seemed to me in hue more red than wont.
With my whole heart, the language of the soul
Which is in all alike, I thanked my God
Most fervently for this new gift of grace ; 90
And in my heart my fervent prayer of thanks
As yet was unexhausted, when I knew
That sweet acceptance it had found with Him ;
For with such lustre, with such glowing red
Between two luminous bands the splendour shone, 95
I cried, Oh Lord ! " Who makes them glorious thus ! "

As sprinkled o'er with large and smaller stars,
In glistening whiteness shines between the Poles
The Milky Way, making the wisest doubt,
So sown and scattered in the depths of Mars 100
Those rays the sign adorable portrayed,
Which the four Quadrants in the circle make.
My genius here before my memory pales,
For on that cross Christ so effulgent shone,
That no comparison might match the theme ; 105
But he who takes his cross and follows Christ,
Shall find excuse for what I leave unsaid,
When Christ shall flash upon him from the cross.
From arm to arm, from head even to the foot,
Moved many lights, shooting more vivid rays 110
Where they encountered or each other passed.
Thus upon earth are seen in lines or curves,
Now swift, now slow, now long perhaps or short,
Atoms of matter ever changing form,
Moving athwart the ray by which is cut, 115
At times, the shadow which for shelter men
Labour with art ingenious to invent.
And as with lute and harp whose many strings
Attuned to concord make a murmur sweet,
Even when the music is not understood, 120
So from the lights which then my vision filled
Rose, gathering round the cross, a melody
Ravishing my sense although unknown the hymn.

Well I perceived it uttered praise sublime,
For to me *Vinci* and *resurgi* came, 125
As to a man who hears yet wotteth not,
My soul was so enamoured with the sound,
That till that moment there was never thing
Which held me bound in bonds so very sweet.
Perhaps my words may seem too ardent here, 130
Slighting the pleasure of her beauteous eyes,
To gaze on which is peace to my desires.
But he who knows that the impress divine
Of every beauty deepens as we rise,
And that till then I had not turned to these, 135
May find excuse for what I charge myself
As my excuse, and see I speak the truth ;
For here that joy divine is not displayed,
Since as we mount more glorious it becomes.

CANTO XV.

From one arm of the Cross a glorious light moves towards Dante, and informs him that it is the shade of his ancestor Cacciaguida. The Spirit describes the simple customs of the Florentines in his own time, and compares them with the corruptions of the time in which the Poet lived.

That will benignant making itself known
In love which always breatheth pure desires,
As evil love is born of will malign,
Silence upon that dulcet lyre imposed
And brought to stillness the celestial chords, 5
Which heaven's right hand now slackens and now draws.
Oh, how shall they be deaf to righteous prayers,
Those spirits who to rouse in me the wish
To question them, with one accord were mute?
It holds to reason, he for ever grieves 10
Who for the love of things which have no part
In worlds eternal, casts this love away.
As through the evening's pure and calm serene
From time to time a sudden meteor shoots,
Startling the eyes in unconcern secure, 15

And seeming like a star which shifts its place,

Save that the region where its flame ignites

Knoweth no loss, and it so quickly dies ;

So from the right extension of the cross

Far as the foot, shot through the space a star,

20

One of the stellar mass which glistened there ;

And from its shining path went not the gem,

But rolling swept the effulgent line along,

As behind alabaster shines the fire.

So did Anchises' loving shade appear,

25

If we may trust our most illustrious muse,

When in Elysium he perceived his son.

O Sanguis meus, O super infusa

Gratia Dei, sicut tibi, cui

Bis unquam cœli janua reclusa ?

30

So spake the light, wherefore with close regard

I looked on it, then to my lady turned,

And both the light and she entranced my soul ;

For such a smile did glisten in her eyes

That with my own I seemed to touch the depths

35

Of grace divine and my beatitude.

On this, with pleasure both to eye and ear,

The spirit added to its first address

Things so profound, I understood them not ;

And they were hid from me not by his choice,

40

But from necessity, for far beyond

All mortal thought did his conception range.

And when the bow of his o'erflowing love
 Was so unbent that his discourse came down
 Towards the mark of our intelligence, 45
 The first expression which I heard was this—
 "Blessèd be Thou, oh God, the Three in One,
 "Who to my lineage hast such favour shewn."
 And then he said—"That dear and long desire,
 "Drawn from perusal of the mighty book, 50
 "Where changeless on the page the writing rests,
 "Thou hast removed, my son, within this light
 "From whence I speak to thee, thanks be to her
 "Who to such lofty flight thy pinions plumed.
 "Thou thinkest that to me thy thoughts are passed 55
 "From Him who is the First, as five or six
 "Result from one once in the mind conceived.
 "And therefore who I am, and why I seem
 "More glad to thee than any soul beside
 "Of this glad company, thou dost not ask. 60
 "And thou art right, for in this happy life
 "Spirits both great and small the mirror search
 "In which thy thoughts are seen ere even thought.
 "But that the holy love which keeps me held
 "In ceaseless watching, and within me wakes 65
 "Such sweet desires, may have its full content,
 "Sound forth thy pleasure, utter thy desire
 "With fearless voice, boldly and full of faith,
 "For lo ! the answer is already thine."

- I turned to Beatrice ; she heard my words 70
Ere they were spoken, and she smiled a sign
Which made the wings of my desire expand.
“ All love,” I said, “ all power to express the same,
“ As ye knew Him who hath no less nor more,
“ For each of you on level balance lay, 75
“ Because that Sun who lights you with His light
“ And warms you with His warmth, these so adjusts,
“ To find a parallel were wholly vain.
“ But then in men will and effective power,
“ From causes which to you are manifest, 80
“ Are furnished not with wings of equal speed.
“ Whence I, who mortal am, feel in myself
“ This inequality, so heart alone
“ Can give thy dear paternal welcome thanks.
“ Thou living topaz, thee I fondly pray, 85
“ Who of this precious jewel art a gem,
“ My longings satisfy and tell thy name.”—
“ Oh thou, the offshoot of which I am root,
“ Whom even to wait for made my spirit glad ;”
Such were the opening words of his reply, 90
Which thus proceeded—“ he who with his name
“ Thy lineage stamped, and o’er one hundred years
“ Hath the first terrace round the mountain trod,
“ My body’s fruit, and thy great grandsire was ;
“ It is befitting that his long fatigue 95
“ Thou shorten by the merit of thy works.

- " Within the ancient circle of the walls,
 " And where even now the hours of prayer are chimed,
 " Florence was peaceful, temperate, and chaste.
 " No golden chains, no jewelled coronets, 100
 " No gaudy dames, no cinctures she displayed,
 " Which filled the eye more than the wearer's self.
 " The daughter at her birth had not yet brought
 " Fear to her father, for within the bounds
 " Of a just measure time and dowry came. 105
 " She had no houses bare of family ;
 " Sardanapalus had not yet arrived
 " To show the wantonness of chamber vice.
 " The Monte Mario was not yet eclipsed
 " By your Uccellatoio, which, surpassed 110
 " As in its rise, so in its fall shall be.
 " I saw Bellincion Berti walk abroad,
 " His girdle bone and leather, and his wife
 " Come from her mirror with unpainted face ;
 " Men of the Nerli's and the Vecchio's race 115
 " I saw content to wear ungarnished skins,
 " Whilst their wives plied the distaff and the loom :
 " Ah, happy women ! certain each to share
 " Her father's sepulchre, none yet to mourn
 " Through France's traffic, a deserted couch ! 120
 " One watched the cradle with a loving care,
 " Soothing the infant with the mimic lisp,
 " The father's, mother's first and purest joy ;

- “ Another winding from the staff the flax,
“ Told to her family who clustered round 125
“ The tale of Troy, Fiesolè, or Rome.
“ As great a wonder it had been to see
“ A Cianghella or a Lapo then,
“ As Cincinnatus or Cornelia now.
“ A citizenship so fair in its repose, 130
“ A burghership so full of loyal faith,
“ A place of residence so very sweet,
“ Were Mary’s answers to a mother’s cries,
“ And in your old baptistery by one act
“ I was made Christian, Cacciaguida named. 135
“ My brothers Eliseo and Morando were ;
“ And from the Val di Pado came my wife,
“ And hence and from this source thy surname came.
“ Then in the Emperor Conrad’s steps I trod,
“ And he enrolled me in his knightly band, 140
“ In such high part he took my valiant deeds.
“ With him I went the iniquity to face
“ Of that false faith, whose followers had usurped,
“ By your chief pastor’s fault, your rightful lands.
“ Then by that race unclean I was set free 145
“ From the deceits of this entangling world,
“ The love of which has soiled so many souls,
“ And from that sufferance to this peace I came.”

CANTO XVI.

At the prayer of Dante the Spirit of Cacciaguida describes the condition and population of Florence in his own time; also the names and characters of the families then most illustrious in it.

Ah, pitiful nobility of blood !

If thou art cause of boasting to mankind

On earth, where feebly the affections stir,

No more shall this to me a wonder prove ;

For there where passion never is at fault—

5

I speak of heaven—I make thee still my boast.

Truly art thou a cloak which weareth fast,

Unless we add to it from day to day,

Time with his shears is ever prowling round.

Using the *you* first brought in use by Rome,

10

But since less practised by the Roman race,

Once more flowed on the current of my words.

Beatrice on this, who somewhat stood apart,

Smiling, appeared like her who warning coughed

When first Ginevra erred, as runs the tale.

15

"You are my father," so I recommenced ;

"You give me courage all my thoughts to tell,

"You raise me so, I rise above myself.

"By streams so many is my spirit filled

"With gladness, 'tis a very fount of joy

20

"Which can bear all and yet not overflow.

"Oh, tell me, then, dear founder of my race,

"Who were your ancestors, how many years

"Measure the space down to your time of birth ?

"Speak to me of the sheepfold of St. John,

25

"How great its glory then, and who were those

"Among its people mightiest in renown ?"

As at the quickening breathing of the wind

The charcoal glows, so I beheld this light

Become more vivid at my courteous words ;

30

And as to me more beautiful it grew,

So with an utterance softer and more sweet,

But not in accents of our modern tongue,

It answered—"From the day first *Ave* rose

"Down to the hour my mother, now in bliss,

35

"Was lightened of the load in me she bare,

"Five hundred times and eighty hath revolved

"This planet, passing underneath the feet

"Of its own Lion to renew its fire.

"My ancestors and I were born where first

40

"Is the last section of the city reached

"By him who runneth at your yearly games.

- " This of my fathers is enough to say,
 " But who they were, and whence they thither came,
 " Silence suits better than to dwell thereon. 45
- " All such as then were fit to carry arms
 " Between the Baptistery and place of Mars,
 " Formed but a fifth of those now living there.
- " But then the citizenship, which now is mixed
 " From Campi, from Certaldo, and Figghine, 50
 " Even to the humblest artizan was pure.
- " How better far the name of neighbour give
 " To those I speak of, and your frontier line
 " At Trespiano and Galluzzo fix,
- " Than have within your walls and bear the stench 55
 " Of d' Aguglionè's and da Signa's churls,
 " With eyes already full of barter foul !
- " Ah, if that people,—so degenerate none !
 " Had not a stepdame unto Cæsar been,
 " But gentle as a mother to her boy, 60
- " Such a one never had been Florentine,
 " Changer and trafficker, but retraced his steps
 " To Simifonte, where his grandsire begged.
- " The Conti still had Montemurlo owned,
 " The Cerchi still been in Ancona's mark, 65
 " In Val de Greve the Buondelmonti still.
- " Races thus mingling have at all times proved
 " The first beginning of a town's disease,
 " As meats too various make the body sick.

- “ And a bull blind with rage more quickly falls 70
“ Than the more peaceful lamb, and it is found
“ That one sword often cuts more keen than five.
- “ Luni and Urbisaglia, if thou note
“ How they are fallen, and how after them
“ Both Sinigaglia and Chiusi fell, 75
- “ Then shalt thou know how races disappear,
“ Nor shall this strange and hard of credence seem,
“ Since even cities hasten to an end.
- “ All that belongs to you must taste of death
“ Even as yourselves, but where the time is long 80
“ Death seems concealed, so brief is human life.
- “ And as the rolling of the lunar sphere
“ To the seashore brings endless ebb and flow,
“ So Fortune with your Florence loves to deal ;
- “ Wherefore that should not strange appear which now 85
“ I of these ancient Florentines shall tell,
“ Whose fame is hidden in the mists of time.
- “ Ughi, Filippi, Catellini, all,
“ Greci, Ormanni, Alberichi too,
“ Now in decay, illustrious I have seen. 90
- “ Great I have seen, as in their lineage old,
“ With the Sanellas, men of Arca’s blood,
“ Ardinghi, Bostichi, and Soldanier.
- “ Near to the gate, now laden with the crime
“ Of a new treason of so great a weight, 95
“ It soon must cause the sinking of the ship,

- " The Ravignani dwelt, from whom are sprung
 " The Contè Guido, and whoever since
 " Has claimed the glory of Bellincion's name.
 " Already Pressa's chief had learnt the art 100
 " How men should rule, and Galigaio's halls
 " Shone with the pummel and the hilt of gold.
 " The ermined pillar still was great, and great
 " Sacchetti, Giuochi, Sifanti, and Barucci,
 " Galli, and they who at the bushel blush. 105
 " The stock which threw Galfucci's branches out
 " Was great already, and the Sizii sate,
 " And Arrigucci in the curule chairs.
 " Alas, how many mighty have I seen
 " Whom pride hath now destroyed ! the golden balls 110
 " Made Florence blossom with their noble deeds.
 " Thus did the honoured ancestors of those
 " Who, ever as your Bishopric is void,
 " Meet in Consistory and in fatness grow.
 " The tribe presumptuous, as a dragon fierce 115
 " To those who flee them, but to him who shews
 " His teeth or purse, meek as a very lamb,
 " Were high already though so mean of race,
 " That Ubertain Donato it displeased
 " That his wife's father sought to make them kin. 120
 " The market now, and not Fiesolè,
 " Was Caponsacco's home, and Guida too,
 " And Infangato were good citizens.

- " That I will tell, incredible though true ;
 " To the small area which the city formed, 125
 " The entrance gate was from the Perass called.
" Each one who quartered on his shield the arms
 " Of the great Baron, to whose name and fame
 " St. Thomas at his feast revival brings,
" Was knight and noble by that right alone ; 130
 " Though to the people's party now is bound
 " He who had edged his crest with fringe of gold.
" The Gualterotti, Importuni dwelt
 " Tranquil in Borgo, which had known more peace
 " If from new fellow citizens exempt. 135
" The house in which your sorrows had their source,
 " Through the just rage which wrought you deadly woe,
 " And placed a period to your happy life,
" Itself was honoured with its kinsmen all
 " Ah, Buondelmontè, evil were the lips 140
 " Which counselled thee the nuptial couch to fly !
" Many would now be happy who are sad,
 " Had God abandoned thee to Ema's wave,
 " When to our city first thy footsteps turned.
" But it was needful, at the shattered stone 145
 " Which guards the bridge, that Florence should supply
 " A victim in her dying days of peace.
" With houses great like these, with more beside,
 " Florence I saw in such sublime repose,
 " She knew no cause of sorrow or of tears. 150

“ With houses great as these, glorious I saw,
“ And so upright her people, that the spear
“ Never the lily bore in shame reversed,
“ Nor evil discord turned its hue to red.”

CANTO XVII

Dante having requested Cacciaguida to make clear to him certain words he had heard in Hell, he does so in noble language. He foretells the exile of the Poet and the calamities he must suffer. Finally he exhorts him to write the *Commedia*.

As he who came to Climené to learn
The truth of words injurious to himself,
And still makes fathers grudging to their sons,
So did I feel, and so was this perceived
By Beatrice, and by the holy light, 5
Which to be near me lately shifted place.
Wherefore my lady said—"Emit the flame
"Of thy desire, so that thy words display
"The full impression of thine inner mind;
"Not that our knowledge may an increase gain 10
"From thy discourse, but thou the habit learn
"To tell thy thirst that men may give thee drink."—
"Dear parent plant, who art so lifted high,
"Thou, as we see that a triangle's form
"Two obtuse angles cannot comprehend, 15

- “ Seest all things contingent ere they be
“ Themselves in essence, looking to the Point
“ To which all times are present and alike,
“ Whilst I by Virgil’s guidance upward clomb
“ High on the mount where spirits are made whole, 20
“ And trod descending the dark world of death,
“ Things of my future life to me were told
“ In weighty words, though I may feel myself
“ A very rock to meet the blows of fate.
“ Hence my desire would much rejoice to learn 25
“ What fortune hath in store for coming years,
“ For when foreseen an arrow’s flight is slow.”
This to that light I said which had before
Spoken to me, and as had been the wish
Of Beatrice, was my own wish revealed. 30
Not in dark sayings, which in blindness gross
Held the insensate nations ere was slain
The Lamb of God Who taketh sins away,
But in words clear and lucid in their aim,
This dear progenitor his answer gave, 35
Hid in his light, yet glistening in its joy—
“ All things contingent which beyond the page
“ Of earth’s material volume have no place
“ Are ever present to the Eternal eye ;
“ Yet this no more necessity implies, 40
“ Than when upon the eye of man the ship
“ Is mirrored which the current floateth down.



- “ From hence as cometh sweetly to the ear
“ The organ’s harmony, so to my mind
“ Cometh the vision time for thee prepares. 45
- “ As Athens saw Hippolitus depart
“ Through his step-mother’s perfidy and hate,
“ So from thy Florence must thy foot be turned.
“ This is their wish, this is already sought,
“ This soon shall be through those who for it work 50
“ Where traffic all the day is made of Christ.
- “ The blame will follow where the injury falls
“ In public cry, as wont, but vengeance still
“ Shall witness to the truth which sends it forth.
“ Thou shalt leave all behind—all that is dear, 55
“ All that is most beloved—and this shall strike
“ First of the arrows shot from exile’s bow.
- “ Thou shalt have very proof how bitter tastes
“ The stranger’s bread, and with what weary step
“ The foot descends and mounts the stranger’s stair. 60
- “ And that which most shall weigh thy shoulders down
“ Shall be the company depraved and dull
“ Thou must encounter in thy time of woe,
“ For all, unthankful weak and wicked, all
“ Shall turn against thee ; yet a little hour 65
“ With shame their foreheads shall be red, not thine.
- “ The issue of the attempt shall be the proof
“ Of its mad folly, leaving thine the boast
“ That thou didst find thy party in thyself.

- “ Thy first asylum, thy first place of rest 70
 “ In the great Lombard’s kindness shall be found,
 “ Who on the ladder bears the sacred bird,
 “ For he shall hold thee in such sweet esteem,
 “ In giving and in asking, with you two,
 “ That shall be first which with the world is last. 75
 “ With him thou shalt behold that one whose birth
 “ This planet’s influence so deeply marked,
 “ That his great deeds will place their mark on time.
 “ The nations yet no knowledge have of these,
 “ So few his years, for those revolving spheres 80
 “ Have nine times only o’er and round him rolled.
 “ But ere great Harry feel the Gascon’s guile,
 “ The sparkles of his virtue shall appear
 “ In scorn of gold, and slighting of fatigue.
 “ So far the acts of his magnificence 85
 “ Shall spread his fame abroad, that even his foes
 “ May not observe them with a silent tongue.
 “ Look up to him and in his favour hope ;
 “ Through him shall many their condition change,
 “ The rich to poverty, the poor to wealth ; 90
 “ Bear on thy mind inscribed the things I say
 “ Of him, but speak them not ;” and then he told
 What e’en the man who sees will scarce believe :
 Then after added—“ Son, this is the key
 “ To what thou heardest, so the perils learn 95
 “ Which lie concealed behind some few short years.

“ And yet I would not thou in envy bold
 “ Thy fellow citizens, since thy future life
 “ Goes far their treason’s punishment beyond.”

After the sainted spirit ceased to speak, 100

By silence showing he had placed the woof
 In the same web where I had placed the warp,
 I then commenced like one who greatly craves
 In his own doubt counsel of any one
 Who knows, hath upright mind and loving heart— 105

“ Well, oh my father, do I see how time
 “ Hurries towards me to inflict the stroke
 “ Most grievous there where most the courage fails ;
 “ Therefore with foresight it is good to arm,
 “ That if bereaved of my dear, much-loved home, 110
 “ I may not by my verse lose other homes.

“ Down in the world of everlasting woe,
 “ And on the glorious summit of the mount,
 “ Lifted from whence by my dear lady’s eyes,
 “ And afterwards through heaven from star to star, 115
 “ I things have learnt which to repeat would bring
 “ A bitter savour unto many hearts ;

“ And if I seem a timid friend to truth,
 “ ’Tis from the fear of losing fame with those
 “ Who shall call ancient this now passing time.” 120

The light in which the much-loved treasure smiled
 Which I had found, first gloriously flashed
 As a gold mirror in the solar ray,

And then it answered me—" A conscience stained,
 " Or by its own or by another's shame, 125
 " Shall truly find the words thou speakest harsh ;
" Yet not the less cast all deceit aside,
 " Let all thy vision be defined and clear,
 " And let him feel the pain who owns the wound ;
" For if thy language shall at first be found 130
 " Harsh to the taste, 'twill prove good aliment
 " After digestion shall have played its part.
" Thy cry shall be in action as the wind,
 " Which strikes the highest peaks with greatest force ;
 " And thus of honour is no trifling proof. 135
" Therefore are shewn thee in these rolling spheres,
 " Upon the mount and in the dolorous vale,
 " Only those spirits who had mighty fame ;
" For he who listens gaineth no content,
 " Nor putteth in examples any faith 140
 " Which come from sources hidden or obscure,
" Nor yet in proofs which are not clearly seen."

CANTO XVIII.

Beatrice points out to Dante many glorious Spirits who in the flesh had fought for the faith. They then ascend into the Sixth Heaven or that of Jupiter. This is the abode of such as in lifetime loved justice and governed by its laws. New marvels of Poetry and Imagination. Many glorious Spirits form themselves into the shape of an Eagle which symbolizes the Imperial Justice. Dante thunders against Pope Boniface.

Now, self-absorbed, in his own thoughts rejoiced
That blessed Spirit, and I savoured mine,
With bitter memories tempering my sweet ;
And she who to my God had led me, said—
“ Give thy thought change, consider that I am 5
“ Nigh unto Him who lightens every wrong.”
I turned about towards the loving voice
Of my sweet comforter, and what I saw
Of love in her pure eyes I leave untold ;
Not solely that my words I here mistrust, 10
But it surpasseth memory to recall
So high a vision without aid of grace ;
This of that time I may alone recount,
That in beholding her, my heart's desire
Was disencumbered of all other wish. 15

Whilst the eternal pleasure which direct
 Streamed upon Beatrice, from her fair face
 To me reflected, gave entire content,
 Dazzling me with the glancing of a smile,
 She said to me—" Turn thee around and list, 20
 " Not in mine eyes alone is Paradise !"
 As oft we see the countenance of man
 Express his passion, if its strength be such
 That the whole soul is holden in its grasp,
 So in the flashing of the saintly flame 25
 To which I turned, I recognised the wish
 Somewhat still further to discourse with me.
 And it began—" In this fifth stage of rest,
 " Mounting the tree whose summit is its life,
 " Which bears fruit always, never loseth leaves, 30
 " Are Spirits blest, who, in the nether realm
 " Ere they had come to heaven, were so renowned,
 " They furnished themes for every Muse's song.
 " Wherefore look to the arms which form the cross,
 " There he I now shall name will do as doth 35
 " The fire electric in its native cloud."
 Athwart the cross I saw a light to flash
 As he gave utterance unto Joshua's name,
 Nor did I hear the word before the act.
 And at the name of the great Maccabee, 40
 I saw another light move rolling on,
 And gladness was the lash which made it roll.

So with Orlando, and with Charlemagne,
My look observant tracked two other lights,
As the eye followeth the falcon's wing. 45
Next Robert Guiscard, William, and the Duke
Godfrey of Bouillon, and Rinoard drew
In and along the cross my ravished eyes.
Then with the other lights moving and mixed,
The spirit of the speaker made me know 50
How high he ranged in the celestial choir.
Towards my right hand then I turned around
That I might see in Beatrice declared,
By act of hers or word, what I should do,
And ah ! her eyes were so serenely bright, 55
So full of joy, in aspect she surpassed
All others, and what she herself had been.
And as with feeling of enlarged delight,
The man who worketh righteousness, perceives
His virtue gaining strength from day to day ; 60
So I perceived the sweep of my ascent
In the co-circling heavens, had wider grown,
Seeing her beauty's marvellous increase.
And like the change which with such swiftness comes
O'er a pale woman's cheek, when from the face 65
The blush of modesty hath passed away ;
So as I turned she seemed unto my sight
Changed by the chastened brightness of the star,
Sixth of the Planets which had me received.

I saw in this rejoicing torch of Jove 70
 The sparkling of the love which dwelt therein,
 Picture the Latin letters to mine eyes.
 And as birds rising from the river's banks,
 As if in joy at their new feeding place,
 Move now in circles, now in marshalled lines, 75
 So in their lights did holy creatures fly
 With gentle flight, and singing as they made
 The figures of a D, an I, or L.
 Singing they moved at first to their own song ;
 Assuming then one of those symbol forms 80
 They ceased awhile their movements and were hushed.
 Oh thou divine Calliope, from whom
 Genius hath glory, and immortal life,
 And by thine aid makes realms and cities great !
 Quicken me with thyself, so that I paint 85
 Those figures as they were by me conceived ;
 In these few verses let thy power be shown.
 Those creatures then formed letters seven times four,
 Vowels and consonants, and I noted well
 Each in its order as they written seemed. 90
Diligite justitiam were the first
 Of the whole picture, substantive and verb,
 Qui judicatis terram were the last.
 Afterwards in the M of the fifth word
 They paused in order, so disposed, that Jove 95
 Seemed there of silver beautified with gold ;

And other lights I saw descend and rest
Upon the summit of the letter M,
Singing, I think, His praise who wills them His.
Then, as when glowing brands together strike, 100
Innumerable rise the burning sparks,
Whence foolish men are omens wont to draw,
More than a thousand lights there seemed to rise
And upwards float, some higher, others less,
Just as the sun, which lights them, had assigned ; 105
And each one in its place being fixed and still,
I saw an eagle's head and neck appear
In very likeness in that glorious blaze.
He who depicteth here no teacher hath,
But teacheth all Himself, from Him proceeds 110
That faculty which giveth form to nests.
That other blessed band, content at first
To form a crown of lilies round the M,
With gentle stir now made the shape complete.
Sweet Planet, ah, how many precious gems 115
Have proved to me that justice upon earth
Is but the work of heaven which thou bedeck'st !
Therefore I pray the Word, in whom have source
Thy movement and thine influence, to behold
Whence comes the smoke which maketh dim thy ray ; 120
So that His auger once again may fall
On those who in the temple buy and sell,
Which martyr's blood and miracles had built.

Ah, heavenly host, my contemplation high !

Pray for the souls, who living in the world 125

By bad example all are gone astray.

Men once were wont to make their war with swords,

But now 'tis made by taking here and there

The bread which the good Father gives to all.

But thou who writest only to absolve, 130

Think well that Paul and Peter, who once died

To save the vine thou spoil'st, are still alive.

Well mayest thou say, my whole desire is fixed

On him who wished in solitude to live,

And who was martyred to reward a dance, 135

Neither the fisherman nor Paul I know.

CANTO XIX.

The Imperial Eagle speaks. Dante is disturbed with doubts as to the possibility of those being saved who never heard of Christ. His doubts are cleared up. God's justice is vindicated, and lessons are drawn from the history and character of reigning Christian Kings.

Before me with extended wings appeared
That beauteous shape, which in fruition sweet
Made glad the spirits congregated there.
Each one a little ruby seemed, in which
The radiant sun so gloriously burned, 5
That on mine eyes its whole reflection fell.
And what at present my description claims,
No voice hath spoken and no ink transcribed,
Nor hath it ever been of fancy born ;
For lo ! I saw and even heard the bird, 10
And in its voice the words were I and Mine,
Though in conception they were We and Ours.
And it began—" Pious I was and just,
" And therefore to that glory lifted up,
" Which no desire can lessen or exceed ; 15

" And I on earth so fair a memory left,
 " The wicked even do not praise withhold,
 " Although they do not imitate my deeds."
 As many burning coals throw out a heat
 One to the sense, so many loving souls 20
 Emitted from the shape one only sound.
 And then I said—" Oh, ye perpetual flowers
 " Of the Eternal gladness, who, though one,
 " Make all your odours my perception reach,
 " Breathe forth thy words and calm that great desire 25
 " Which for long time hath made me hunger sore,
 " Finding on earth no food to satisfy.
 " Well do I know, if other states in heaven
 " God's divine justice by reflection see,
 " Yours apprehends it with no veil between. 30
 " Ye know how earnestly I am prepared
 " To hear, the nature of my doubt ye know,
 " Its greatness, now my old and craving wish,"
 As when the hood is lifted off its head
 The falcon moves, and joyful beats his wing, 35
 Proud in his beauty, eager for the flight,
 So did I see the bird imperial, formed
 Of spirits singing laud to grace divine
 With songs well known to the glad souls of heaven.
 And then it spake—" He who with compass marked 40
 " The confines of the world, and in its sweep
 " Inclosed so much, both hid and manifest,

- “ Could not so place the impress of His mind
“ On the wide universe, that still His word
“ Should not remain in infinite excess. 45
- “ And this is certain, for the first great Pride,
“ Who of all creatures was most excellent,
“ Scorning the light, fell immature to earth ;
- “ Hence every minor nature would appear
“ To be a small recipient for that good 50
“ Which is the infinite measured by itself.
- “ Our understanding, then, which we must hold
“ To be a ray of the eternal mind
“ Of which all things in Heaven and earth are full,
- “ In its own nature cannot power possess 55
“ So great, as not to see its source divine
“ Is mightier far than it appears to be ;
- “ Into the justice everlasting then
“ The insight man receives, no deeper goes
“ Than doth the eye into the mighty surge ; 60
- “ Which though it sees the bottom from the shore,
“ Doth not in open ocean, yet not less
“ 'Tis there, but hidden in the depths profound.
- “ There is no light but that from heaven derived
“ Where trouble dims not, darkness is all else, 65
“ Or fleshly blindness or its deadly fruits.
- “ Now wholly open is the secret place
“ Which from thy sight the living justice hid,
“ Of which so often thou hast question asked ;

- " For thou hast said ' Upon the Indus banks 70
 " A man is born, there no one preacheth Christ,
 " None reads of Him, none writes of Christian truth,
 " And all his wishes and his acts are good,
 " So far as human reason can perceive,
 " His deeds are sinless, sinless are his words. 75
 " If without faith and unbaptised he die ;
 " How call that justice which condemneth him ?
 " If he believe not, where can be his sin ?'
 " But who art thou who sittest as a judge
 " To measure out ten thousand miles of space 80
 " With power of vision trifling as a span ?
 " True he who thus with me should subtilize,
 " Were not the Holy Scriptures given for guide,
 " Would find much room for wonder and for doubt.
 " Oh, creatures of the dust, oh, spirits dull ! 85
 " The Primal Will, in its own essence good,
 " Is Himself ever, being the Lord supreme !
 " Just as to Him attuned, the note is true,
 " No good created draws Him to itself,
 " But He, in radiance, of the good is cause." 90
 As o'er its nest the stork in circles wheels,
 After her brood of young ones have been fed,
 And as to her the sated fledgling looks,
 So the blest image did, and so did I
 Mine eyes uplift, because its pinions moved, 95
 Stirred by so many wills in spirit there.

Wheeling, it sung and said—"As are the words
 "I speak to thee who understand'st them not,
 " So the eternal judgments are to men."
 After they ceased to move, those lucent fires 100
 Of the most Holy Spirit, still in form
 Of the great ensign of the Roman power,
 Again it spake—"Unto this blessed realm
 " None ever came, believing not on Christ,
 " Neither before the nailed cross nor since. 105
 " But note thou this, many who cry, Lord, Lord,
 " Shall in the judgment be less near to Him
 " Than those who Christ have never known nor learnt ;
 " Christians like them the Ethiop shall convict,
 " When from the great division one shall go 110
 " To wealth eternal, one to endless want.
 " What can the Persians to your monarchs say,
 " When they shall see the volume's page displayed,
 " On which are written all their evil deeds ?
 " There among Albert's works shall this be seen, 115
 " This which shall move the judge's righteous pen,
 " The realm of Prague a very desert made.
 " There shall be seen the woe which has been wrought
 " On the Seine's banks by the false money coined
 " By him to whom a wild boar's tusk was death. 120
 " There shall be seen the unbridled pride which roused
 " To foolish madness Englishman and Scot
 " To hold in scorn the boundaries of their realms.

- " There seen the luxury and sensual life
 " Of Spain's high monarch, and Bohemia's king, 125
 " Who never virtue knew nor cared to know.
 " There seen the cripple of Jerusalem,
 " His goodness by the figure One expressed,
 " Whilst by a Thousand are his vices shewn.
 " There shall be seen the avarice and vice 130
 " Of him who rules Sicilia's fiery isle,
 " Where good Anchises closed his aged eyes ;
 " And to give proof how mean he was of soul,
 " Marred are the letters which his story write,
 " And tell much evil in a little space. 135
 " There shall all see the shameless arts by which
 " His uncle and his brother have seduced
 " So great a nation, and two crowns to shame.
 " And he of Portugal, and Norway's king,
 " Shall there be seen, and he the Rascian Prince 140
 " Who to his sorrow saw Venetian gold.
 " Ah, happy Hungary, if ill usage now
 " She will no longer bear ! ah, blest Navarre,
 " If now her armour be the mountains round !
 " And by this earnest, each must now believe, 145
 " That Famagosta and Nicosia both
 " Lament, and cry aloud for their foul beast,
 " Which with the others may with justice herd."

CANTO XX.

In this Canto the Eagle speaks of kings who were just and virtuous. Marvellous flights of the Poet's imagination. He inquires why Trojan and Ripheus who were pagans are now in Paradise. Reasons are given in very instructive and noble language.

When he who the whole world's expanse illumines
Sinketh below this hemisphere of ours,
And day on every side is fading fast,
The heavens by him alone so lately lit,
Are in an instant seen again to glow 5
With many lights, borrowing their light from one.
This state of heaven to my remembrance came,
Soon as the blessed ensign of the world
And of its governors had ceased to speak ;
For all that company of living lights, 10
More and more lucent, chanted songs divine,
Now faint and feeble in my memory.
Oh, tender love, clothing thyself in smiles,
How glowing didst thou seem in those sweet tones,
Which only breathe the breath of holy thoughts ! 15

After those precious and most lustrous gems,
By which the sixth light jewelled I beheld,
From their angelic harmony had ceased,
A river's murmur then I seemed to hear,
From rock to rock descending clear and full, 20
Showing the richness of its mountain source.
And just as sound at the lute's neck receives
Its modulation, and the player's breath
Enters within the openings of the reed,
So with a sudden break of silence came 25
A murmur from the eagle, rising up,
Up by the throat, hollow as if within.
And this was changed to utterance, and this
At length assumed the shape of very words,
Such as my heart desired and graven there. 30
"That part in me which sees and braves the sun
"In mortal eagles," thus to me it spake,
"Calls upon thee for fixed observance now ;
"For of the lights of which my shape is formed,
"Those which as eyes are sparkling in my head 35
"Of their degree are greatest and the first.
"This centre one, which like the pupil shines,
"Was the most Holy Spirit's psalmist sweet,
"Who bore the ark of God from town to town ;
"He knoweth now the merit of his song, 40
"So far as in himself the choice was free,
"By the reward which is proportionate.

- “ That of the five, which form mine eyebrow’s arch,
“ And hath its place therein the most in front,
“ Consoled the widow grieving for her son ; 45
“ He knoweth now how dear a price it costs
“ Christ not to follow, by the experience gained
“ Of this sweet life and of its opposite.
“ That following next in the circumference
“ Of which I speak, taking the upper curve, 50
“ By a true penitence his death deferred ;
“ He knoweth now that the Eternal Judge
“ Hath never change, though faithful prayer on earth
“ Until to-morrow this day’s doom defer.
“ The next in place, the pastor to exalt, 55
“ Through good intentions bearing evil fruit,
“ Made himself Greek with me and with the laws ;
“ Now knows he that the evil which had source
“ In his good action, though to him no hurt,
“ Hath been albeit destruction to the world. 60
“ And that thou seest in the descending curve
“ Was William, and his loss that land deplores
“ Which grieves that Charles and Frederick are alive ;
“ Now well he knows how heaven itself hath joy
“ In a just King, and in the vivid flash 65
“ Of his own brilliancy he shews it still.
“ Who in the world of error would believe
“ That Troy’s Ripheus in this arch would be
“ The fifth in order of those holy lights ?

- “ Now hath he knowledge of the grace divine, 70
“ Deeper and better than the world perceives,
“ Although his vision go not to its depths.”
- As the lark ranges the untroubled air,
Now full of song, now still, as if content
And cloyed with the last sweetness of its song, 75
So seemed to me this figure bearing stamp
Of the Eternal pleasure, at whose will
All things created what they are, become.
- And though I was in reference to my doubt,
As is the crystal to the colouring tint, 80
I did not let the time in silence lag,
But from my lips the words, “ What things are these ?”
By their own earnest purpose were impelled ;
And then I saw a mighty gladness flash.
- And after this, with eye more full of fire, 85
The blessèd ensign thus to me replied,
Not to prolong my wondering suspense—
“ I note thou givest credence to these things
“ Because I speak, but dost not see the why ;
“ So that, although believed, they yet are hid. 90
“ Thou dost as he who something by its name
“ Well apprehends, but of its essence hath
“ No knowledge, till another make it known.
- “ *Regnum Cœlorum* suffereth violence
“ From ardent love and from a living hope, 95
“ Which is all-conquering with the Will divine

- “ Not in the fashion man o’er man prevails,
“ But it is conquered because wishing it,
“ And conquered, with its goodness conquers still.
“ The first soul in the eyebrow, and the fifth 100
“ Cause wonder in thee, for thou seest in them
“ A very glory to the angelic realms.
“ They left the flesh, not Gentiles as thou think’st,
“ But Christians, firm in faith, for one of whom
“ Christ’s suffering was to come, for one was past ; 105
“ Because from hell, where to return to God
“ None ever wills, his body one resumed,
“ And thus of living hope was the reward ;
“ Of living hope, which wrestled in the strength
“ Of urgent prayer to bring him back to life, 110
“ So that his will might yet be stirred to good.
“ The glorious spirit of whom now I speak,
“ For a brief time once more resuming flesh,
“ In Him believed who had the power to help ;
“ And his belief so with the fervour glowed 115
“ Of love divine, that when again he died,
“ Worthy he was to share this place of bliss.
“ The other spirit, through a grace which flows
“ From so profound a fount, no living eye
“ Had ever power unto its source to pierce, 120
“ All love he had on earth to justice gave ;
“ Therefore God showed him, adding grace to grace,
“ The story of redemption yet to come.

- " So he believed, and from that hour no more
 " Could he the sink of paganism brook, 125
 " But sought the blinded nations to reprove.
 " Those maidens three, whom erewhile thou didst see
 " At the right wheel, for baptism were to him
 " More than a thousand years ere baptism was.
 " Predestination ! ah, how far remote 130
 " Are thy deep springs from their intelligence,
 " Who see not totally the First Great Cause !
 " You, oh, ye mortals, take a wary heed
 " Unto your judgments, for we, seeing God,
 " Know not as yet the whole of the elect. 135
 " Ah, sweet to us is this great ignorance,
 " Because our bliss is perfected in this,
 " That what God willeth, that we also will."
 Thus, therefore, from the figure all divine,
 To make my insufficient vision clear, 140
 A soothing medicine to me was given.
 And as a skilful harpist makes the chord
 Vibrate in concert with the singer's skill,
 So that the song more exquisite becomes ;
 Thus while it spake I to remembrance called 145
 That I beheld the two celestial lights,
 As the two eyelids in concordance act,
 Move at the words with brighter glow of flame.



CANTO XXI

The Poet ascends to Saturn. This planet is the abode of souls which, when in the flesh, lived in holy contemplation. He there encounters the shade of Peter Damianus, who answers his inquiries respecting Predestination. Contrast between the Prelates of Dante's time and the holy Apostles.

Once more mine eyes were fixed upon the face
Of Beatrice, and with them went my soul,
And from all other thoughts it was withdrawn ;
And yet she smiled not, but addressed me thus—

" Were I to smile, then wouldest thou be like

5

“ To Semelè, when ashes she became ;

“ Because my beauty, which upon the steps

“ Of the eternal palace, richer grows,

“ As thou hast seen, the higher we ascend,

“ Were it not tempered, so intensely shines,

10

“Thy natural forces would before the blaze

“ Be as the leafy branch the thunder rends.

“ Up to the seventh splendour we are borne,

“ Which now beneath the Lion’s flaming breast

“ Radiates commingling influence on earth.

15

Mr. Radia

“ See that thy mind be servant to thine eyes,
“ And mirrors make of these to take the shape
“ Which in this lucent planet shall appear.”
Whoe’er conceives how lovingly I fed
Upon the aspect of her blessèd self, 20
When to another’s care my thoughts were turned,
Must know how pleasantly my heart was moved
To give obedience to my heavenly guide,
Placing in counter-balance this and that.
Within this world-revolving crystal orb, 25
Bearing the name of earth’s good king of old,
Under whose sway all wickedness was dead,
Coloured like gold, which glitters in the sun,
I saw a ladder reaching to a height
Far, far beyond the compass of my view. 30
Also I saw descending by the steps
So many splendours, that I thought the light
Of the whole firmament was there diffused.
And as by habit to their nature fit
The crows together, at the break of day, 35
Flap their chilled pinions to recover warmth,
Then some depart returning there no more,
Others come back to their first place of flight,
And others wheeling on the spot remain ;
It seemed to me that somewhat thus it was 40
With the bright throng which came together down,
As to a certain step they all attained ;

And one of them which nearest to us stopped
Shone with such lustre, that in thought I said—
“ Truly I see thy love in this its sign ;” 45
But she from whom I wait the how and when
To speak or silent be, was mute, so I,
Curbing my wish, did well to question not.
She upon this who had my silence seen,
In the regard of him who seeth all, 50
Said to me—“ Satisfy thine ardent wish.”
And I began—“ The merit I possess
“ Makes me not worthy of thine answer, save
“ Through her who gives me leave to make request.
“ Oh, blessèd spirit ! who remaineth hid 55
“ Within thy gladness, grant to me to know
“ The reason thou approachest me so close,
“ And tell me wherefore silent in this sphere
“ Is the sweet symphony of Paradise,
“ Hymned so devoutly in the spheres below ?”— 60
“ Mortal, thy hearing is as is thy sight,”
He made me answer ; “ here no song is heard
“ For the same cause thy lady ceased to smile.
“ Down by the holy ladder’s steps I came
“ Thus far, my whole intent to make thee glad 65
“ With words and with the light which is my robe.
“ ’Tis not from greater love I quicker come,
“ For love as great and greater burns above,
“ As unto thee the effulgence maketh plain.

- " But love divine, which makes us prompt to serve 70
 " The guiding Providence which rules the world,
 " As thou perceivest, makes the election here."—
 " Well do I see," I said, " oh, sacred lamp !
 " How love unfettered in this holy court
 " Hath power enough to serve the eternal mind. 75
 " But this to me seems hard to understand ;
 " Why thou alone predestinated wert
 " Of thy compeers this office to discharge."
 I had not yet pronounced my closing word
 When, making centre on itself, the light 80
 Began to rotate like a rapid mill.
 Then from within replied the blessèd shade—
 " The light divine which strikes me with its ray
 " Pierces this light where I embosomed rest ;
 " Its power with my intelligence conjoined 85
 " Lifts me so far above myself, I see
 " The Supreme Essence whence it emanates.
 " From this the gladness comes which makes me shine,
 " For just as I behold His glory clear,
 " So is the brightness of my ambient flame. 90
 " And yet that soul, the brightest in the heavens,
 " That seraphim with eye most fixed on God,
 " To answer thy request shall not suffice ;
 " For what thou askest in the dread abyss
 " Of the decree eternal lies so deep, 95
 " To all created vision it is hid.

- “ And to the world of men, at thy return,
“ Recount thou this, that no one may presume
“ To move towards a mystery so profound.
“ The mind which here is light, is dark on earth ; 100
“ Therefore behold how can it do below
“ What here it cannot though by heaven sublimed.”
- His words placed such a check upon my will,
That I my question waived, and was content
With much humility to ask his name. 105
- “ Twixt the two shores of Italy, nor far
“ From thine own land, riseth a rocky mass
“ So high, that far below the thunders roll.
“ This forms a ridge, which Catria is called ;
“ And at its base is found a lonely shrine, 110
“ Raised for the worship of the one true God.”
- Thus for the third time he took up his speech,
And then continued—“ This was my abode,
“ And there my God so truly did I serve,
“ No food I knew save what the olive yields ; 115
“ Calmly I passed my days, in heat or cold,
“ On thoughts contemplative content to dwell.
“ Once to these heavenly realms this cloister gave
“ A plenteous crop, but is so barren now,
“ That soon must its transgressions be revealed. 120
- “ I in this place Pier Damianus was,
“ But was the sinner Peter in the house
“ Called of our lady upon Adria's shore.

- “ Not many years remained to me of life
“ When I was prayed and forced to take the hat, 125
“ Which passes down from evil unto worse.
“ When Cephas came, and of the Holy Ghost
“ The Chosen Vessel, lean and bare of foot,
“ With charity’s scant fare they were content.
“ Now modern pastors need on either side 130
“ Ushers to help them, men to carry them,
“ So fat they are, and bearers for their trains ;
“ With lordly cloths their palfreys they bedeck,
“ So that two beasts are covered by one skin.
“ Ah, God, how much Thy holy patience bears ! ” 135
As the voice spake, more little flames I saw
Descend from step to step ; and as they whirled,
At every whirl more beautiful they were.
Surrounding this one, then they ceased to move,
And cried aloud with such a mighty cry 140
No earthly noise might be with it compared,
Nor knew I aught, so vanquished by the sound.

CANTO XXII.

A Spirit laments over the present degraded condition of the Religious Orders upon earth. Dante now ascends into the sphere of the fixed stars, resting in the sign Gemini. He looks down from thence on the Planets and the World of Men beneath him.

Oppressed with stupor, to my guide I turned
With the same confidence a little child
Runs to the dearest object of its trust ;
And she, with the sweet haste a mother brings
Assistance to her pale and panting boy 5
In the dear voice so wont to pacify,
Said—" Knowest thou not that now thou art in heaven,
" And knowest thou not that heaven all holy is,
" And that all here is done through righteous zeal ?
" How much thou hadst been changed, hearing the song 10
" And seeing my smile, thou now canst truly judge,
" Since by this cry so mightily disturbed ;
" The prayer contained in which hadst thou but heard,
" To thee already were the vengeance known,
" Which thou shalt see before thy dying day. 15

" The sword divine strikes not its blow in haste,
 " Nor tardily, save in the sight of him
 " Who may await it with desire or dread.
 " But towards others turn thee now around,
 " For spirits most illustrious shalt thou see
 " If, as I tell thee, thou thy look direct."

20

I turned mine eyes as she was pleased to will,
 And saw a hundred little spheres, and these
 Mingling their rays, more beautiful became.

I was like one who curbs within himself
 The edge of his desire, and doth not seek
 To question, fearing he may ask too much ;

25

And so the largest and most lucent one
 Of these celestial pearls towards me came
 To make itself the solace of my wish.

30

Then from within I heard—" If thou couldst see,
 " Even as I do, the love which in us burns,
 " All thy desires had freely been expressed ;
 " But that thou may not by delay be checked
 " In thy great purpose, I shall answer give
 " To that chief thought thou hast so much at heart.

35

" The summit of that mountain, on whose slope
 " Cassino rests, was once the great resort
 " Of men idolatrous and ill disposed.

" And I am he, the first who thither bore
 " The name of Him who to the earth conveyed
 " The truth which does so sublimiate us here ;

40

- “ And such a stream of grace upon me flowed,
“ That I withdrew the towns and places round
“ From the false worship which seduced the world. 45
“ Those other flames were all in lifetime men
“ Of contemplation, quickened by that heat
“ Which brings to birth all holy fruits and flowers.
“ Here is Macarius, Romoaldo there,
“ And here my brethren whom the cloister walls 50
“ Made sound of body, resolute of heart.”
And then I said—“ The affection which thy words
“ Prove unto me, and the fair seeming, too,
“ I see and note in all your radiant lights,
“ Have made my confidence in thee expand, 55
“ As the sun makes the rose, when it displays
“ The full and utmost glory of its flower.
“ Wherefore I pray thee, Father, let me know
“ If I be capable of so much grace
“ As to behold thy face without the veil ? ” 60
On which he said—“ Brother, thy wish sublime
“ Shall be fulfilled in the Empyrean sphere,
“ Where mine and all desires fulfilment find.
“ There perfect, ripe, and in itself entire,
“ Is each desire, for in that sphere alone 65
“ Is every part as it hath ever been,
“ For place it knows not, nor revolves on poles,
“ And high even unto it our ladder mounts,
“ Wherefore its top escapeth from thy sight.

- " Into the heavens the patriarch Jacob saw 70
 " The very summit of the ladder reach,
 " When it seemed laden with angelic weight.
" But to ascend it now none ever stirs
 " His foot from earth, and so my rule remains,
 " But to waste paper in the world below. 75
" Walls which were once the bounds of holy ground
 " Are become dens of thieves, and the monk's hood
 " Only a sack of foul and rotting flour.
" But rankest usury striveth not so much
 " Against God's holy pleasure, as that fruit 80
 " Which bringeth folly to the hearts of monks.
" For so much as the Church may hold in ward
 " Belongs to such as ask for love of God,
 " Not for their kin, or something worse than kin.
" The flesh of men is of such feeble stuff, 85
 " What may be well begun lives not the time
 " From the oak's planting to the acorn's growth.
" Peter began with gold and silver none,
 " I in the strength of fasting and of prayer,
 " And Francis made humility his rule. 90
" And if thou notest well how each began,
 " And then observest whither each hath strayed,
 " Thou shalt perceive the white is turned to brown.
" But Jordan's waters backwards driven, the sea,
 " Parting its waves at the great word of God, 95
 " Were mightier wonders than were succour here ! "

Thus did he speak, and afterwards rejoined
His brotherhood, and all together drew,
Then like a whirlwind swept themselves aloft.
One sign from my sweet lady made me haste 100
To follow after by those holy steps,
So much her power my sluggish nature stirred ;
Never on earth, where men ascend or fall,
Was known a natural movement to compare
In its great swiftness with my upward flight. 105
As I may hope, oh, reader, to return
To this celestial glory, which hath brought
Tears for my sins, and smiting for my breast,
Thou hadst not placed thy finger in the fire
And plucked it out, ere I had seen the sign 110
Which follows Taurus, and had entered it.
Oh, glorious planets ! oh, thou pregnant light
With mighty influence ! and to which I owe
All that may be of genius I possess ;
With you had risen and with you had set 115
He who is Father of all mortal life,
When first I breathed the breath of Tuscan air ;
And when I entered afterwards by grace
Into the lofty sphere with which you roll,
Thy region was allotted me by fate. 120
To you devoutly now my spirit breathes
In prayer for strength to face the toil sublime
Of that high matter which absorbs my soul.

"Thou art so near thy place of bliss supreme,"
 Beatrice began, "that it is right thou have 125
 "Thine eyes discerning and thy vision clear ;
 "Therefore before thou further plunge therein,
 "Look down, beneath thee see how large a part
 "Of the great world already I have placed,
 "So that thy heart with all its wealth of joy 130
 "May be laid bare to the triumphant band,
 "Which fill with gladness this ethereal round."
 To the seven spheres I turned and bent my look,
 Down by them all, and lo ! this globe I saw
 So small that its poor aspect made me smile ! 135
 And that man's judgment I uphold for best,
 Who has it most in scorn, and he who thinks
 On higher worlds may truly wise be held.
 I saw the daughter of Latona shine
 Without that shadow which was once the cause 140
 That I believed her substance rare and dense.
 The aspect, oh, Hyperion, of thy son
 I now sustained, and I could see how near,
 And round him Maia and Diōne rolled.
 Here, too, I saw the tempering fire of Jove, 145
 "Twixt son and father, and to me were plain
 Those variations which their bearings caused ;
 And unto me all seven made manifest
 How great they are, how swift in their career,
 And how in distance just each holds its place. 150

This little space of which we are so proud,
As I turned round with the eternal Twins,
I wholly saw from mountain to the sea ;
Then to the eyes of beauty mine I turned.

CANTO XXIII.

Wonderful vision of the triumph of Christ. Jesus and Mary are beheld surrounded by an infinite host of angels and saints. Marvels of the Poet's intellect and imagination. The Angel Gabriel descends like as a flaming torch to crown Mary.

As a bird, after nestling with its young
In sweet repose beneath the leaves beloved,
In the dull night when everything is hid,
That she may see the objects of her love,
And to procure the food to nourish them, 5
Sweet labour, in its very trouble sweet !
Perched on the open branch forestalls the day,
And with a longing wish awaits the sun
With gaze unbroken till the dawn is born ;
Thus stood my lady with her form erect 10
Turned with observance towards that space in heaven
In which the sun most slowly seems to move ;
So at her wistful and expectant look
Like I became to one whose longing wish
Craved something new, and hoping was content. 15

But between this and that the time was short,—
 I mean between expectance and the sight
 Of the fast growing brightness of the heaven.
 And Beatrice said—" Behold, behold the host
 " Of the triumphant Christ ! lo, the whole fruit 20
 " And gathered harvest of those circling spheres ! "
 All glowing as with fire her visage seemed,
 And such a glorious gladness filled her eye,
 I have no words to tell it, so pass on.
 As in the times serene of the full moon 25
 Trivia among the nymphs eternal smiles,
 Who fleck with beauty all the vault of heaven,
 High above lights unnumbered I beheld
 A sun illuminating each and all,
 As in our starry firmament our own ; 30
 And through the living and transparent light
 The lucent essence with such glory flashed,
 Mine eyes could not its majesty sustain.
 " Ah, Beatrice," I cried, " guide sweet and dear ! "
 And then she said—" That which so conquers thee 35
 " Is power divine which nothing can resist.
 " Lo ! here the wisdom, here the might of Him
 " Who between heaven and earth revealed the way,
 " For ages long the great desire of man."
 As from the cloud the imprisoned lightnings break, 40
 From lack of space for dilatation there,
 And against nature downwards flash to earth,

So fed by those divine delights, my soul,
More large becoming, from itself escaped,
And what it did cannot to memory bring. 45

“ Open thine eyes, behold me as I am ;
“ Things thou hast seen which unto thee have given
“ The power thou needest to sustain my smile.”

I was as one recalling to himself
Some long-forgotten dream, and who essays 50
In vain to give it form within his mind,

At this sweet overture, worthy in truth
Of such deep gratitude, no lapse of time
May blot it from the volume of the past.

If all those tongues were now to grant me aid 55
Which Polyhymnia and her sisters once
Made eloquent with their most honied milk,

Yet to the veriest shadow of the truth
I might not reach, singing this holy smile,
And how it made her holy aspect glad. 60

And thus while striving Paradise to paint,
My sacred poem must by bounds advance,
Like one who finds a crevice in his path.

But he who thinks upon my mighty theme,
And the poor shoulders which the burden bear, 65
If under it I tremble, will not blame.

This is no ocean for a little barque
Which I now furrow with my hardy prow,
Nor for a pilot who would labour shun.

“ Why art thou so enamoured of my face, 70
“ That the fair garden claims no look from thee
“ Which flowers beneath the radiant light of Christ ?
“ Here is the Rose, in which the Word divine
“ Became incarnate ; here the Lilies blow,
“ Which with their odours led the way to truth.” 75

So Beatrice spake, and I, with earnest zeal
At her monition, turned again to face
The o’erpowering glory with a trembling lid.
Even as mine eyes when shadowed by the gloom
Have seen at times the meadow-tinting flowers, 80
As a clear ray came breaking through the cloud,
So troops of glorious splendours I beheld,
By vivid rays illumined from above,
Though not the source whence all this splendour came.

Ah, Power benign, which so impresseth these, 85
Thou hast ascended that I might regain
The visual strength Thy glory so obscured !
The name of the sweet flower which I invoke
Each morn and evening, held my soul absorbed
In close observance of the chiefest light. 90

And soon as to mine eyes were made distinct
The nature and the greatness of the star,
Which living rules above as once below,
A torch came down from out the inner heavens,
Forming a radiant circle like a crown, 95
And this encompassed it and round it rolled.

Whateyer melody most sweet in strain
Here upon earth attracts the enraptured sense,
Had been a thunder clap to crack the ear,
Contrasted with the music of this lyre, 100
By which the sapphire beautiful was crowned,
Which makes the blue of heaven more sapphire bright.
“ I am angelic love ; round thee I roll
“ The joy sublime which from thy womb is breathed,
“ The sheltering place of our supreme desire ; 105
“ And I shall roll, oh, Queen of Heaven ! so long
“ As thou art near thy Son, and shalt enrich
“ The Empyrean by thy presence there.”
Then to its close the rolling concord came
Of the sweet music, and the other lights 110
All sounded forth the sound of Mary’s name.
The royal covering over all the spheres
Of the great world, more glowing and more quick
Near God’s perfections and near God Himself,
Was in its concave high from us removed 115
So distant, that its aspect was not yet
To me made visible where I was placed ;
Therefore my visual orbs possessed not power
To follow in its course the crownèd flame
Which rose attendant on the seed divine ; 120
And like a child which to its mother’s breast
Extends its arms, after the sweet repast,
Its heart’s love breaking out in loving act,

Each of those stainless lights with upward sweep
Lifted its crest, so that the love supreme 125
It bore to Mary was made manifest.
Then in my presence they continued there,
Singing *Regina cæli*, and the song
So sweetly rose, it resteth my delight.
Ah, flowing is the plenty stored within 130
Those arks most precious, which on earth have been
The blessed sowers of eternal life !
Here dwell, and in the treasure all are glad
Which was acquired with weeping and with woe
In Babylon, where gold was gladly left. 135
Here triumphs, under the eternal Son
Of God and Mary, in his victory,
And with the blessed saints, both old and new,
He who of such high glory holds the key.

CANTO XXIV.

The blessed Spirits form moving circles of celestial joy. From amidst these Peter comes forth. He questions Dante respecting Faith. The Apostle receives clear answers and is satisfied.

- “ Oh, chosen guests to the great supper bid
“ Of the all-blessèd Lamb, who feedeth you
“ So that your every appetite is filled,
“ Since by the grace divine this one foretastes
“ Of the excess which from your table falls, 5
“ Before the hand of death his time prescribes,
“ Be ye considerate to his huge desire,
“ And with some showers bedew him, for ye drink
“ At that fount always whence his thoughts are drawn.”
Thus Beatrice spake, and all those spirits glad 10
Became like spheres which rolled on fixèd poles,
In brightness flaming as a comet doth.
And as the wheels adjusted are in clocks,
So that in turning he who notes shall see
The first seem still while swiftly flies the last, 15

So in the whirling dance those spheres revolved
With movements various, and their glory's wealth
Was judged by me as these were swift or slow.
From that one which most beautiful I deemed,
I saw a fire come forth so wondrous bright, 20
That in its circle none was brighter left ;
And around Beatrice three times it turned,
Singing a music so divine, the strain
I cannot in my fancy now recall ;
Therefore my pen description overleaps, 25
For to depict such depths, not merely words
But even imagination colour lacks.
“ Ah, holy sister ! so devout thy prayer,
“ Thou by the ardent impulse of thy love
“ Detachest me from this resplendent sphere ; ” 30
Then pausing in its whirl, the blessed flame
Towards my lady turned the vocal breath,
Which to the words I wrote had utterance given
And she—“ Oh, light eternal of the man
“ So great, to whom our Lord consigned the keys 35
“ Of this most wondrous joy He bore to earth,
“ Search him on points both simple and profound,
“ As it may please thee, bearing on the faith
“ Which gave thee power to walk upon the sea.
“ If he love well, believe, and truly hope, 40
“ Is not from thee concealed, for lo thine eyes
“ Behold where all things are as pictures seen.

" But since this realm hath many citizens
 " Through the true faith, that this be glorified,
 " 'Tis right that he be called to speak thereon." 45

Just as the scholar silently prepares
 To meet the theme his master may propound,
 To be discussed by him but not defined,
 So I with every reason armed myself
 Whilst she was speaking, that I might be prompt 50
 For such a querist, and confession such.

" As a good Christian be thy meaning plain ;
 " Say, what is Faith ?" on this I raised my head
 Towards the light from whence the question came ;
 Then turned to Beatrice, and she at once 55

Gave sign by look and eye that I should draw
 Full from the inner fountain of my mind.
 " Ah, may the grace which wills me to confess,"
 Then I began, " before the Church's Prince,
 " Make my ideas both precise and clear." 60

And I continued—" As the words of truth,
 " Fell, oh, my father, from thy brother's pen,
 " Who, dear to thee, with thee gave truth to Rome,
 " Faith is the substance of the things we hope,
 " It is the evidence of things not seen, 65
 " And this to me appears its *quid est* true."

And then I heard—" Thou hast the sense correct,
 " If thou conceivest well why it is placed
 " First among substances, and after, proofs."

When he had ceased, I said—" The things profound, 70
 " Which are so freely open to me here,
 " Are in the world so hidden from the sight,
 " That their existence rests in faith alone,
 " On which is stablished our sublimest hope,
 " And which by substance therefore is expressed ; 75
 " And on this faith we are constrained to found
 " Our grounds of reasoning, with no proof beside,
 " Therefore the name of evidence it bears."

Then this I heard—" If upon earth the sum
 " Of doctrine were thus clearly understood, 80
 " There would be found no room for sophistry."

Thus did that breath of glowing love exhale,
 And added—" Nobly hath the test been passed
 " By this thy coin in purity and weight,
 " But tell me, is it treasured in thy purse ?" 85
 " Yes," I replied—" so shining and so round,
 " That of its impress I can never doubt."

Next from the light profound which glistened there
 This question followed—" This most precious gem,
 " On which all other virtue hath its base, 90
 " Whence comes it ?" and I said—" In the rich shower
 " Of the most Holy Spirit, which is shed
 " Over the Testaments, the Old and New,
 " The syllogism is found which hath convinced
 " So subtilly, that in the face of it 95
 " All demonstration fails to me in force."

And then I heard—" The propositions both,
 " The old and new, which thy conclusions prove,
 " Wherefore dost thou regard them as divine ?"
 I said—" The proof which bares to me the truth 100
 " Rests on the works which follow, and for these
 " Nature no iron heats, no anvil strikes."
 Thus the rejoinder—" Say, who makes thee sure
 " That these things came to pass ? that which itself
 " Hath need of proof is all thine evidence." 105
 " If without miracles the world," I said,
 " Turned to the Christian faith, then that alone
 " Were miracle so great, all else were naught ;
 " For poor and hungry thou didst find thy way
 " Into the field to sow the precious seed 110
 " Which was the vine, and now, alas, the thorn."
 Thus having said, the Holy Court sublime
 Thundered *Te Deum* through the rolling spheres,
 In strains of music known alone to heaven.
 And the great Prince who thus from branch to branch 115
 In his examinings had led me on
 Till we approached towards the highest boughs,
 Again commenced—" The grace which sweetly spreads
 " In joy within thee hath thy lips unclosed
 " Unto such point as there was need it should ; 120
 " So what thy tongue hath uttered I approve ;
 " But now 'tis right that thou declare thy creed,
 " And whence the evidence for thy belief."

" Ah Spirit, blessèd Father ! who dost see

" What thou didst so believe, thou wentest in 125

" Within the tomb before the younger feet,"

I then began—" Thou wilt I declare

" The form of this my ever zealous faith,

" And also would'st my reason for the same.

" I therefore answer, I believe One God 130

" Sole and eternal, who, Himself unmoved,

" Moveth all heaven by love and by desire ;

" And for such faith, I do not merely find

" In metaphysics and in physics proof,

" But also in the truths rained down on earth 135

" By Moses, by the Prophets, by the Psalms,

" The Holy Gospels, and by you who wrote

" Because the Spirit breathed in you its fire ;

" In Persons three Eternal I believe,

" And these One Essence, and so One and Trine, 140

That it permits at once both *sunt* and *est*.

" Of the condition most divinely deep

" Which I now touch on, oftentimes my mind

" Hath by the Gospel doctrine been impressed.

" This is the principle, and this the spark 145

" Which, breaking forth in a more vivid flame,

" Glistens within me like a star in heaven."

As when the Master pleasant tidings hears,

His servant he embraces, full of joy

At the good news, when he hath ceased to speak ; 150

So, dropping blessings on me while it sang,
Three times around me rolled, when I had paused,
The Apostolic lamp, at whose command
My mouth gave utterance to such welcome words.

CANTO XXV.

The Apostle James questions the Poet touching the virtue of Hope. He asks what it is and whence it comes. John the Apostle of Love then addresses Dante. The Poet is so deeply impressed with the Apostolic words and dazzled with the brightness of his glorious light that his sight fails him.

If e'er it happen that my sacred song,
In shaping which both heaven and earth concurred,
And which hath wasted me through many years,
Vanquish the cruelty which shuts me out
From my fair fold, where as a lamb I slept 5
Beset by wolves which fiercely ravage it ;
Then with another voice and hair more gray
Poet shall I return, and shall receive
At my baptismal font the laurel crown ;
For there I found the entrance to that faith 10
Which makes souls known to God, and was the cause
That Peter round my forehead thrice revolved.
Towards us then a luminary moved,
One of that blessed band from which came forth
The prince of vicars left by Christ on earth. 15

And filled with joyfulness my lady said—

“ Behold, behold ; for lo ! the chief is here

“ Through whom the peoples to Galicia flock ! ”

As when a pigeon settleth near its mate,

The two in show of mutual fondness vie, 20

Circling and murmuring their notes of love,

So saw I one of those most glorious chiefs

Made by the other welcome, and they gave

Laud to the viands of the high repast.

But after interchange of greetings glad, 25

Each *coram me* in silence placed itself,

So full of glory that I veiled my face.

Then Beatrice with smiling aspect said—

“ Oh, soul illustrious, by whose scripture men

“ Know the whole wealth of our celestial realm, 30

“ Make hope resound in this exalted heaven ;

“ Thou knowest thou didst symbol it so oft

“ As Christ His glory to the Three revealed.”—

“ Lift up thy head, fear not, but be assured ;

“ For that which hither cometh from the earth 35

“ Must here be ripened in our rays divine.”

Such comfort reached me from the second Lamp ;

And so I raised mine eyes unto the hills

Which first had sunk them by excess of power.

“ Since then the grace of our Almighty King 40

“ Wills thou shouldst see, still living, face to face,

“ The Palatines in His most secret hall ;

- “ So that the truth beholding of this court,
“ That Hope which unto earth such comfort brings
“ May through it strength to thee and others give, 45
“ Say, what it is, say how the flower had root
“ Within thy mind, and say from whence it came ;”
Thus did the second Light continuing speak.
And she my sainted guide who plumed my wings
In loving guidance to such lofty flight, 50
Ere I had time to answer, thus rejoined—
“ In the Church militant no member fights
“ More rich in hope, as may be read in Him,
“ The Sun which casts its radiance o’er us all ;
“ Therefore to this one is vouchsafed to pass 55
“ From Egypt’s night unto Jerusalem’s day,
“ Before the battle of his life is closed.
“ The other points, which from no need to learn
“ Are asked, but that to earth he may report
“ How much to thee this virtue giveth joy, 60
“ To him I leave, for hard they will not prove
“ Nor breed vain-glory ; let him answer give,
“ And may the grace of God accord him aid.”
As pupil to his master answer makes
Promptly and willingly in what he knows, 65
So that his merits may be brought to light ;
“ Hope is a certain waiting for,” I said,
“ Of future glory, which causation hath
“ In grace divine and antecedent works.

- " From many stars to me this knowledge came ; 70
" But he who first instilled it in my heart
" Was the great Psalmist of the Sovereign King.
" ' Let them have hope in Thee who know Thy name,'
" In his most lofty song of praise he sings ;
" And who knows not His name with faith like mine ? 75
" Thou hast bedewed me with such plenteous dew
" Of thine Epistle since, that I am filled,
" And can some portion upon others shed."
Whilst thus I spake, within the living heart
Of that great flame flickered a vivid blaze, 80
Sudden and frequent, like the lightning's flash.
From this was breathed—" The zeal with which I burn
" Towards that virtue which hath followed me
" Even to the palm and the last battle field,
" Wills me once more to speak, for thy delight 85
" It is, and sweet to me, that thou shouldst tell
" What is the promise Hope to thee has given."
Then I—" The Scriptures, Old as well as New,
" Impress the mark, and this to me declares,
" The souls whom God is pleased to make His friends. 90
" Isaiah saith, that each one shall be clothed
" In his own country with a double robe,
" And his own country is this blessed life.
" And there thy brother, more distinct and clear,
" Where the white raiment of the saints he treats, 95
" This revelation manifests to us."

“ In earth, and earth my body is, and there
“ Shall with the others rest till time complete 125
“ The appointed number of God's high decree.
“ In the blest cloister with the double robe
“ Are only those two lights just risen on high,
“ And to your world this knowledge shalt thou bear.”
The glowing circlet at these words was still, 130
And with it ceased that dulcet harmony
Of song commingling in the trinal breath,
Just thus, to take repose or peril shun,
Before the oars are plunged into the wave,
All at the pilot's whistle are at rest. 135
Ah, with what trouble was my heart disturbed
As I turned round to look on Beatrice,
And had no power to see her, though I was
Close to herself, and in the happy world !

CANTO XXVI.

The Apostle John examines the Poet touching the holy virtue of Charity. The Courts of Heaven rejoice and glorify God. The Poet's sight is restored. He then perceives the Light of the first Father Adam, who clears up his mental doubts and satisfies his wishes.

Whilst by my dazzled vision thus perplexed,
Forth from the blinding flame the dazzling cause
An utterance breathed which my attention fixed,
Saying—"Till thou recoverest the sense
"Of sight so injured in beholding me, 5
"Tis good by converse to make up the loss.
Begin, then, and declare where doth thy soul
"Point its desires, and be assured of this,
"Thy sight is only hindered, not destroyed ;
"For she who through this most transcendent realm 10
"Conducts thee, hath that virtue in her look
"Which Ananias in his hand possessed."
I said—"As it shall please her, soon or late
"May healing touch mine eyes, which were the doors
"Through which she came with fire that ever burns. 15

“ The Good Supreme, which makes this Court content,
“ The Alpha is and Omega in all
“ Love teacheth me, or simple or profound.”
That self same voice that chased away the fear
Which had so suddenly my sense confused, 20
Still filled my heart with earnest wish to speak ;
And said—“ ’Tis certain through a finer sieve
“ Thou must be sifted, and ’tis fit thou say
“ Who did thine arrow point to such an aim.”—
“ By reasons philosophic,” I replied, 25
“ And by authority from heaven derived,
“ Such love must needs be graven on my soul ;
“ For the true good once apprehended well
“ Thus love enkindles, and so much the more
“ As in itself the goodness is supreme. 30
“ Hence to the Essence so pre-eminent
“ That every good which out of it exists
“ Is nothing but a ray of its own light,
“ More than to any other must the mind
“ Of all be moved, who, loving, know the truth 35
“ On which the argument above is based.
“ Such truth to my intelligence was shown
“ By him who proved to me the primal love
“ Of every essence having endless life.
“ Clear too it sounded from the Lord of truth, 40
“ Who said to Moses, speaking of Himself,
“ ‘ Before thee will I make my goodness pass.’

“ Clear, too, thou mad’st it in thine opening text
“ Of the High Message, which proclaims on earth
“ Heaven’s secret with revealment unsurpassed.” 45
And then I heard—“ Let thine intelligence
“ And all authority conformed to it
“ Thy chief and crowning love keep for thy God.
“ But further say, if thou feel other cords
“ Draw thee towards Him, so that I may hear 50
“ How many motives make thy love supreme.”
The holy purpose of Christ’s eagle here
Was not obscure, for I at once perceived
To what my faith’s profession he would lead.
Wherefore I recommenced—“ Those reasons all 55
“ Which have the power to turn the heart to God,
“ Together work to draw my soul to Him ;
“ The world’s existence, my own entity ;
“ The death that He sustained that I might live,
“ And that which I and all believers hope, 60
“ With the full knowledge spoken of but now,
“ Have drawn me from the sea of sinful love,
“ And placed me on the shore of love divine.
“ The leaves which the whole garden beautify
“ Of the eternal Gardener, in so far 65
“ I love as He hath willed in them of good.”
As soon as I had ceased, a most sweet song
Resounded through the heavens, and with the rest
My lady “ Holy, holy, holy,” said.

And as a piercing light the slumber breaks 70
 Through the force visual which returneth back,
 As the gleam strikes the eye from coat to coat,
 And what he sees the awakened man avoids,
 All undiscerning in the sudden change,
 Until his judgment bringeth to him aid ; 75
 So every obscuration of my eyes
 Was chased by Beatrice with the beams of hers,
 Which threw their light more than a thousand miles ;
 Wherefore I saw more clearly than before,
 And almost lost in wonder I inquired 80
 Whose was the fourth light in our presence there.
 My lady answering, said—" Within those rays
 " With joy beholds his Maker the first soul
 " Which the great Power creative ever formed."
 As bends the foliage of the topmost boughs 85
 When the wind passes, and again rebounds
 By the indwelling force which lifts it up,
 So was it with myself while she discoursed,
 Lost in my wonder ; but my courage came
 In the desire with which I burned to speak, 90
 And I began—" Oh, apple, which alone
 " In ripeness was produced, Father ! to whom
 " Each bride was daughter both in blood and kin,
 " With all humility I thee beseech
 " That thou wouldst speak to me ; thou seest my wish, 95
 " And, that I sooner hear, I tell it not."

At times some animal its covering moves
So that its inner restlessness is shown
By the contortions of its envelope.
In a like manner the primeval soul 100
Made me see clearly through its outer veil
How great its pleasure was to give me joy.
Then breathing said—" Though not by thee expressed,
" I yet more palpably discern thy wish
" Than thou the surest thing thou knowest of ; 105
" For it is mirrored in the face of Him
" Who in Himself reflecteth other things,
" Whilst nothing in itself reflecteth Him.
" Thou wouldest learn how long it is since God
" Placed me within the earthly Paradise, 110
" Where Beatrice plum'd thee for thy flight sublime,
" How long its beauty was mine eyes' delight,
" And the true reason of the wrath divine,
" The tongue I spake, the language which I formed.
" Now, oh, my son, the tasting of the fruit 115
" Not of itself so great an exile caused,
" But solely the transgression of command.
" There whence thy lady Virgil moved to help,
" For years four thousand, hundreds three and two,
" I longed to join this conclave of the blest. 120
" And him I saw to all the lights return
" Which stud his course, nine hundred thirty years,
" While in the flesh I sojourned upon earth.

- " The language which I spake was wholly lost,
 " Ere to the work which no completion had 125
 " The men of Nimrod turned their thoughts and hands.
" For never work from human reason sprung
 " To humour man's desires, subject to change
 " From astral influence, long duration knew.
" That man should speak is simply nature's act ; 130
 " But to speak thus or thus, then nature leaves
 " Man to do that as to himself may please.
" Ere to the pains infernal I went down,
 " *El* was the name of Him the good supreme,
 " Whence all the gladness which surrounds me comes ; 135
" New *Eli* called ; such changes needs must be,
 " For mortal customs vary like the leaves
 " Upon the boughs, some come whilst others go.
" Upon the mount most high above the surge
 " I was, both innocent and passion-stained, 140
 " From the first hour to that which next succeeds
" To the sixth hour, as the sun's quadrant shifts."

CANTO XXVII.

Saint Peter utters words of terrible indignation against the Pastors of the Church.
Dante ascends into the Primum Mobile. Here all man's distinction of time
and place is lost. The nature and quality of this sphere are described.

To Father, Son, and Holy Spirit rose .
The song of glory from all Paradise,
So sweet the music, I was drunk with joy.
That which I saw to me seemed like the smile
Of the whole universe, for both by sight 5
And by the hearing did my transport come.
Oh joy, oh happiness ineffable !
Oh life complete, in love and holy peace !
Oh wealth secure without desire or dread !
Before mine eyes the four transplendent lamps 10
Moved not, and that one which had first appeared
Began to flush with a more vivid glow ;
And such in its appearance it became
As Jove would have become, if he and Mars
Had, being birds, their plumage interchanged. 15

That Providence which here divides to all

Their charge and office, to the hallowed choir

Had silence now on every side imposed,

When this I heard—"If I more brilliant shine,

"Be not surprised for even whilst yet I speak, 20

"These all in colour shall more glorious be.

"He who upon the earth my place usurps,

"My place! my place! which is an empty place

• "In the great presence of the Son of God,

"Hath of my cemetery made a sink 25

"Of blood, and garbage, where the wicked one,

"Who fell from hence, finds his content below."

Rich with the hue, which, from the facing sun,

Tinteth the clouds at morning or at eve,

I now saw heaven's expanse all dappled o'er; 30

And like a modest maiden who remains

Sure of herself, and, when another falls,

Even at the very hearing, timid grows,

So in her aspect Beatrice was changed;

And so in heaven must the eclipse have been, 35

When suffered on the cross the Power Supreme.

He after this continued his discourse

And in a voice so altered in its tones,

Not greater was the change his semblance showed;

"The spouse of Christ was nurtured not with blood 40

"Of Linus, or of Clitus, or my own,

"For the mere purpose of acquiring gold;

- " But for the gaining of this blessed life,
 " Calistus, Sextus, Pius, Urban shed
 " Their blood with weeping and with mighty woe. 45
 " The purpose was not ours, that on the right
 " Of our successors seated should 'be part
 " Of Christ's own people, part upon the left ;
 " Nor that the keys committed to my hands
 " Should a mere banner's heraldry become, 50
 " To bear in combat against men baptized ;
 " Nor that my image should be made a seal
 " For lying privileges bought and sold,
 " Raising my frequent blush of wrath and shame.
 " Clothed in the shepherd's robe rapacious wolves 55
 " Are seen from hence o'er all the pastures spread,
 " Ah, God the Avenger, wherefore sleepest Thou !
 " Men of Cahors and Gascons are prepared
 " To quaff our blood ; ah, thou beginning good,
 " To what vile end it is thy lot to come ! 60
 " But that high Providence, which in Scipio brought
 " Safety to Rome, the glory of the world,
 " Will soon bring succour, as my soul believes.
 " And thou, my son, who burdened by the flesh
 " Must still return to earth, speak freely out, 65
 " And what I do not hide conceal not thou."
 As the earth's atmosphere drops down in showers
 Its gelid vapours, when the sun and horn
 Of the celestial goat each other touch,

So I beheld on high the æther flushed 70
 With glory shower triumphant vapours round,
 Which had with us made sojourn here below.
 I followed with mine eyes their shadowy forms,
 Until so wide the space between us grew
 As to set limits to my visual power ; 75
 On which my lady, seeing me released
 From upward observation, said—" Look down,
 " Behold how great a circuit thou hast made !"
 Since I had downwards looked the former time,
 I saw that I had moved through the whole arc, 80
 Which the first climate spans from noon to west ;
 So beyond Cadiz there I saw the course
 Ulysses tempted, here more near, the shore
 On which Europa was so sweet a load.
 And more had I discovered of the site 85
 Of this poor globe, had not the sun advanced
 Onward beneath my feet one Sign and more.
 My ravished soul, which always took delight
 In my dear lady, more than ever sought
 To turn again to her my yearning eyes ; 90
 And if by nature or by art are formed
 Allurements for the eye to tempt the mind
 In mortal bodies, or in pictured shapes,
 All heaped together would as nothing be
 To that divinest joy which on me flashed 95
 When round I turned towards her smiling face ;

- And then the force imparted by her look
 Tore me away from Leda's lovely nest,
 And thrust me into heaven's most rapid sphere.
 Its various parts most vivid, most sublime, 100
 Are so alike, I have no power to tell
 The place which Beatrice for entrance chose.
 But she, who saw the point of my desire,
 Smiling began, and with such gladness fraught,
 That in her face the joy of God appeared ; 105
 " The nature of the movement which retains
 " The centre still, and moveth all around,
 " As from its starting place, beginneth here.
 " And in this heaven there is no other place
 " Than the eternal mind, where burns the love 110
 " Which rolls it, and the influence it sheds.
 " It is surrounded with all love and light.
 " As it surrounds the others, and its bounds
 " He who encircles it alone can know.
 " In other movements it no measure hath, 115
 " But they by it are measured, just as ten
 " Is by the five its half, the two its fifth.
 " And how it is that in this mighty vase
 " Time hath its roots, whilst others shew its leaves,
 " May now by thee be clearly understood. 120
 " Cupidity ! oh thou who plungest men
 " Deep in thy surges, so that none has strength
 " To lift his eyes to pierce thy waters through !

- “ Of good intentions mortals show the flower ;
“ But rain continued long transforms the fruit 125
“ And the rich plum becomes the shapeless prune.
“ Now faith and innocence are only found
“ In little infants, since they both take flight
“ Before the cheeks are covered with the down.
“ Such, such a one, still lisping, keeps the fasts, 130
“ Who afterwards, with loosened tongue, devours
“ At any season any kind of food ;
“ And such a one, still lisping, loves and hears
“ The mother’s voice, who, with the power of speech,
“ In later days her burial longs to see. 135
“ ’Tis thus that human nature, the fair child
“ Of him who brings the morn and leaves the night,
“ First in its aspect white, becometh black.
“ Thou, that thou mayest not cause of wonder have,
“ Know that on earth there is no governing head ; 140
“ Hence have mankind so wandered from the way.
“ But before January from winter pass,
“ Through time’s small fraction upon earth ignored,
“ Those spheres of heaven shall be so loudly moved,
“ That the great destiny, looked for now so long, 145
“ Shall turn the vessels’ poops where point the prows,
“ So that the fleet shall steer its course aright ;
“ And the true fruit shall follow on the flower.”

CANTO XXVIII.

Dante beholds a most glorious and dazzling Point of light. This is the Divine Essence. Description of the three Hierarchies of Angels and Nine Choirs which circulate around the lustrous Point of the Godhead. Marvels of Poetry and Imagination.

When with the light of truth the present life
Of wretched mortals was by her laid bare
Who had with joy imparadised my mind ;
As one, behind whose back a torch is lit,
Sees in a mirror the extending flame, 5
Ere yet in sight or thought the torch itself,
And turns about to be assured the glass
Telleth the truth, and finds that it agrees
With this, as doth the music with the words,
So to my own remembrance was recalled 10
What I had done, looking in her sweet eyes
Where love had made the net which held me bound ;
And as I turned, and when mine eyes were struck
By what appears in the celestial book,
Each time the mighty scroll is closely scanned, 15

I saw one Point which radiated light
So vividly, the eye on which it burned
Was closed perforce against its piercing power ;
And even the smallest star seen from the earth
Beside it placed, as in the sky is placed 20
Star with its star, had seemed in size a moon.
Perhaps as near as seems the halo's ring
Around the light which gives the colouring tints,
When vapours bearing it most densely roll,
In distance rotated a ring of fire 25
So swiftly round the Point, that it surpassed
The quickest sphere of the great universe ;
And this was cinctured by another ring,
This by a third, the third was by a fourth,
This by a fifth, and by a sixth the fifth ; 30
Next came the seventh circle so enlarged
In its expanse that Juno's messenger
Could not have spanned its full circumference ;
And so the eighth, and ninth, and each of these
More slowly moved according as its place 35
Was at a distance greater from the One ;
And that ring glowed with the most lucid flame
Which nearest was to the pure central spark,
Because methinks most in its essence like.
Then spake my lady who had seen me held 40
In curious wonder—" On that single Point
" Hang the whole universe and Nature's self.

- " Behold the circle most with it conjoined,
 " And know thou this, its movement is so swift
 " From the refulgent love which spurs it on." 45
 And then I said—" Were the whole world disposed
 " In the same order in those wheels perceived,
 " What thou hast said had been for me enough ;
 " But, lo, we see in the material world
 " The rolling spheres so much the more divine, 50
 " As from the centre they are more remote.
 " Wherefore to place a term to my desire
 " In this most wondrous and angelic fane,
 " Which hath for limits love and light alone,
 " I still would know why in one way alike 55
 " The copy and exemplar fail to go ;
 " Because in vain are all my thoughts thereon."—
 " If to unloose such knot thy fingers fail
 " In their sufficiency, be not surprised ;
 " It is so tight because it is not tried." 60
 Thus spake my lady, and continuing said—
 " Grasp what I tell thee wouldst thou be content,
 " And on it sharpen well thy reasoning powers.
 " The heavens material are, or large or small,
 " Proportioned to the virtue less or more 65
 " Which is diffused throughout their every part.
 " More great the goodness, so the bliss more great ;
 " A greater body holds a greater bliss
 " If all the parts be equally complete.

- " Wherefore this sphere, which carries with itself 70
 " The whole great universe, must correspond
 " With that which loveth most and knoweth most.
 " And thus, if thou thy thoughts considerate turn
 " Not to the outer space but inner power
 " Of all those essences in rings disposed, 75
 " Thou shalt behold concordance wonderful
 " From great to greater, and from small to less,
 " In every heaven, with its intelligence."
 As in serenity and splendour rests
 The aerial hemisphere, when Boreas blows 80
 In the direction of his gentlest force,
 Because the once obscuring vapours flee
 Resolved and scattered, and the sky is glad
 With the whole beauty of its starry host ;
 So was myself soon as my lady brought 85
 With her clear answer succour to my doubt,
 And like a star in heaven the truth was seen.
 And when her words had altogether ceased,
 Iron in fusion scatters not its sparks
 In other manner than those circles flashed. 90
 Each spark new sparks emitted in its turn,
 So many were they, that they numbered more
 Than thousands doubled in the chequer's squares.
 From choir to choir I heard Hosanna peal
 Tow'rds the fixed Point which to the *Ubi* these 95
 Holds and shall always, where they always were ;

- And she, who saw my hesitating thoughts,
Then said—" The first two circles have disclosed
" The Cherubim and Seraphim to thee.
" Thus swift they follow the attracting force 100
" To have His likeness, far as they have power,
" And power they have, just as their sight sublimed.
" Those other essences which around them move,
" They are named Thrones of God's own face divine,
" Since the first trinal hierarchy they closed. 105
" And this thou oughtst to know : all have delight
" Just as their vision pierces to the depths
" Of Truth, where all intelligences rest.
" From whence thou mayest perceive, Beatitude
" Hath its foundation in the act of sight, 110
" Not in the loving act, which after comes ;
" And of the sight the measure is good works,
" Which spring from grace and from concurrent will ;
" Thus step by step the onward move proceeds.
" The other trine which thus angelic germs 115
" In this the place of everlasting spring,
" Which the nocturnal Ram despoileth not,
" Hosanna carols with perpetual chant
" Of threefold melody, which in the three
" Orders of gladness sounds, which make the trine. 120
" And in this hierarchy are the three gods ;
" First there are Dominations, Virtues next,
" And next the order third of Powers succeeds.

- “ Then in the choral rings penultimate,
“ Archangels, Principalities revolve ; 125
Angels alone make joyance in the last.
“ Those orders upwards all intensely gaze,
“ And so prevail below, that towards God
“ All are attracted, whilst they all attract.
“ And with such mighty longings Denys sought 130
“ To contemplate those Orders, that he named,
“ And, like myself, described them in detail.
“ But Gregory thought not afterwards as he ;
“ Whence and so soon as in this heaven his eyes
“ Were opened, he at his own error smiled. 135
“ And if so great a truth to mortal sight
“ Was given on earth, let it no marvel seem,
“ For he, who saw it here, shewed it to him
“ With many other truths those circles point.”

CANTO XXIX.

Beatrice perceiving the doubts of Dante proceeds to describe the action of God in the universe. She points out the weakness and folly of earth's philosophers. With profound indignation she dwells on the impostures of Preachers, who invent dogmas and sell indulgences solely for the love of gold.

When the two children of Latona rest
In Aries' and in Libra's covering signs,
And of the same horizon make a zone,
What time the zenith both in balance holds,
Till one and other from the circle fled, 5
Change hemisphere and break the equipoise,
So long, with face all beautiful with smiles,
Was Beatrice silent, her unfaltering gaze
Fixed on that point which had so conquered me.
Then she began—" I know and do not ask 10
" What thou wouldst hear, for I have seen it there
" Where every *Ubi* every *Quando* points ;
" Not to become more blessed in Himself
" (Which cannot be), but that His glorious beam
" In others shining might *Subsisto* say, 15

- “ In His eternity, before all time
“ And all man’s comprehension, as He willed,
“ The eternal Love was in the angels shown.
“ Nor before this did He inactive rest,
“ For there was neither after nor before 20
“ Until the Spirit on the waters moved.
“ Matter and Form conjoined, and virgin-pure,
“ Sprang from the act which no shortcoming knew,
“ As from a three-stringed bow three arrows fly ;
“ And as in crystal, amber, or in glass, 25
“ The ray so glances, time no moment hath
“ Between its advent and the full display ;
“ So from its Lord did the triform effect
“ Come forth at once in essence all complete,
“ Without distinction at its genesis. 30
“ Then, too, in order absolute were fixed
“ These substances, and in the universe
“ They highest were in which pure action reigned.
“ Pure matter holds creation’s lowest place ;
“ In the mid region bonds so firm unite 35
“ Matter with action, they are never loosed.
“ To you hath Jerome of the angels told,
“ How their creation had been ages long
“ Before the universe besides was formed ;
“ But this my truth is read in many texts 40
“ Of those who by the Holy Spirit wrote,
“ And thou shalt see it if thou studiest well ;

- “ And even reason can perceive in part,
“ For it would not consent that moving power
“ Should rest so long without its work to do. 45
- “ Now knowest thou where created, when and how,
“ Those holy creatures were, so that are quenched
“ Already three hot sparks of thy desire.
- “ In numbering thou hadst not to twenty reached,
“ Ere part of that angelic host had brought 50
“ Disturbance to your elemental world.
- “ The rest remained, and that sweet work began,
“ Which thou perceivest, and their joy is such,
“ That they will ever in those circles roll.
- “ The springhead of the fall was in the pride 55
“ Accursed of him who was by thee beheld
“ Pressed by the world's whole gravitating weight.
- “ Humble were those whom thou now seest here
“ In gratitude to goodness infinite,
“ Which made them fit for such perception high ; 60
- “ And hence their sense of seeing was enlarged
“ By grace enlightening, and their own deserts,
“ Resolved and perfect therefore is their will.
- “ I would not thou shouldst doubt, but be convinced
“ That there is merit in receiving grace, 65
“ In measure as love opens to its flow.
- “ Now round this consistory of the blest
“ Thou mayest, if thou hast rightly stored my words,
“ And without other aid, to fulness gaze.

- “ But since 'tis taught on earth, and in your schools, 70
“ That the angelic essence is of kind
“ To understand, remember, and desire,
“ Further I speak, that clearly thou mayest see
“ The truth which men unsettle in the world,
“ Themselves deceiving by such teaching strange. 75
“ Those substances having with gladness once
“ Beheld the face of God, turned not their eyes
“ Away from Him, from whom is nothing hid ;
“ Therefore their vision is by objects new
“ At no time troubled, therefore hath not need 80
“ Ideas to recall which now are past.
“ This being so, men, sleeping not, yet dream,
“ Some holding that they teach the truth, some not ;
“ But with the latter rests the greater shame.
“ You move not there below by one true path 85
“ Philosophizing, so much are you led
“ By fond display and its engrossing thought.
“ Yet, notwithstanding, this is viewed above
“ With less displeasure than where Holy Writ
“ Is thrust aside, or with false glosses read. 90
“ You think not how much blood it cost on earth
“ To sow the seed, nor of the joy in heaven
“ O'er him who humbly maketh it his law.
“ Each one is labouring to appear profound
“ And weave his own conceits ; these are the texts 95
“ The preachers handle ; not the Gospel truths.

- “ One says the moon rolled backward in her path
“ At the Lord’s passion, and so interposed,
“ That the sun’s light reached not the darkened earth ;
“ Another, that the very light was hid 100
“ By its own act, so that the same eclipse
“ By Spaniard, Indian or by Jew was seen.
“ One single year hears more vain fables sound
“ From Florence pulpits than the eye may note
“ Lapi and Bindi crowding in her streets ; 105
“ So that the flocks which little knowledge have,
“ Turn from the pastures pastured by the wind,
“ And not to see their loss is no excuse.
“ Christ to His first assembly did not say,
“ Go forth and preach vain babblings unto men, 110
“ But gave the apostles the foundation true ;
“ And with such power this sounded from their lips,
“ That in their combats to extend the faith,
“ Alone the Gospel was both shield and spear.
“ But now with jests and with buffooneries 115
“ The preacher preaches, and if hearers laugh,
“ Pleased is his vanity ; ’tis all he seeks !
“ But in the hood a bird hath made its nest,
“ Which could the vulgar see, they would perceive
“ The fine indulgences on which they lean ; 120
“ Through these hath folly so increased on earth,
“ That without proof by any witness given,
“ Men would to any promise blindly trust.

- " With them St. Antony makes fat his swine,
 " And things besides more evil than his swine, 125
 " Paying with money which no mint had coined.
 " But having thus digressed so far, 'tis good
 " That now we turn towards the road direct,
 " So that thy path be short as is the time.
 " Those angel natures rise from rank to rank 130
 " So vast in number, that no tongue can tell,
 " Nor man's conception to the total reach.
 " And if thou read'st what Daniel hath revealed,
 " There shalt thou find the sum determinate
 " Beneath the thousand of his thousands hid. 135
 " The Primal Light which radiates on them all,
 " In ways as various is by them received,
 " As there are angel glories which it joins.
 " Wherefore because the affection of the soul
 " Follows the act of sight, the joy of love 140
 " Is warm and fervent variously in these.
 " Behold thou now how great the height and breadth
 " Of the Eternal Power !—dispersed throughout
 " Unnumbered mirrors in His image made,
 " The same He still remains, one as before." 145

CANTO XXX.

Dante sees the beauty of Beatrice increase in glory and beyond all his powers of description. He is now in the Empyrean. He perceives a river from which rise and into which again fall sparks in splendour resembling gems. The Poet's vision becomes more vivid. He beholds the Angels and Saints in the form of a mystic rose.

Distant, from us, perhaps six thousand miles
The sixth hour glows, and now this earth inclines
Its shadow almost to the horizon's plane,
When the mid vault of heaven high overhead
Begins to show such signs, that many stars 5
Cease to be seen from these our earthly depths ;
And as the brilliant handmaid of the sun
Moves in advance, the eyes of heaven are closed
Star after star even to its brightest orb ;
Thus the angelic choirs which evermore 10
Play round the Point which overpowered my sight
And seemed contained by that which it contains,
By small degrees from vision passed away,
Wherefore I turned mine eyes to Beatrice,
Now seeing nothing and by love constrained. 15

If all that has been said of her till now
Were here summed up into one term of praise,
It would be feeble help for present need.
The beauty which I saw so far surpassed
Not merely man's conception, that I think 20
Its Maker only could its fulness taste.
Here in my narrative I own defeat,
So great that never passage of his theme
Comic or tragic Poet more subdued ;
For as the sun makes void the enfeebled sight, 25
So the remembrance of her gentle smile
Did paralyse the action of my mind.
From the first day on which her face I saw
In mortal life unto this present time
The progress of my song was never checked ; 30
But I must now desist, and in my verse
Further of her high beauty cease to sing,
Like every artist at the crowning touch.
Thus beautiful, as to a loftier note
I left her than my trump can sound which now 35
Proceeds its arduous labour to conclude,
With voice and action of an earnest guide
She recommenced—" Lo ! we have now emerged
" From the prime sphere to heaven which is pure light ;
" Light intellectual and full of love, 40
" Love of true good, of very gladness full,
" Gladness superior to all other joy.

“ Here shalt thou see the hosts of Paradise,
“ Both orders, and the one in fashion such
“ As thou shalt see it at the last assize.” 45

As sudden lightning scattering disunites
The visual forces, so as to deprive
The eye of power to see the plainest things ;
So did the living light around me flash,
Leaving me swathed in such a covering veil 50
Of its own brightness, nothing else I saw.

“ The Love which gives this Paradise its peace
“ Greets always with such welcome His elect,
“ To make the taper suited to its flame.”

No sooner had my mind received the sense 55
Of these short words than I at once perceived
The virtue in me mightily increased ;
And with fresh power of sight I was supplied,
So that no radiance, howsoever pure,
Could have brought need of covering to mine eyes. 60

I saw a light which like a river flowed,
Flashing with waves of glory, both its banks
Rich with the wondrous livery of spring.
Forth from this river issued living sparks,
And these on every side dropped on the flowers, 65
Like unto rubies which are set in gold.

Then as if drunk with odours, these again
Plunged in the body of the glorious stream,
And as one entered, came another forth.

" The deep desire which fires thee now, and stirs 70

" Thy soul to understand thine eye's report

" Pleases me more in measure of its depth.

" But of this water thou hast need to drink,

" Before the thirst so great in thee be quenched ;"

Thus spake to me she of mine eyes the sun ; 75

Adding—" The river and the gems which pass

" In it and out, the smiling of the flowers

" Faintly prefigure their reality ;

" For these things are not of themselves obscure,

" But in thyself the imperfection lies, 80

" For yet thy vision has not soared so high."

Never did child with more impetuous haste

Turn to its mother's milk, if roused from sleep

Somewhat more tardily than is its wont,

Than did myself, to make mine eyes become 85

Still better mirrors, bend towards the wave

Which flows to enlarge the vision of the soul.

And soon as drank of it the very edge

Of mine eye's lids, at once to me it seemed

No more that it had length, but now was round. 90

Then as the actors in a masquerade

Look other than they were when they are stripped

Of the false features under which they hid ;

So I perceived to greater gladness changed

The flowers and sparks : and lo, I then beheld 95

Made manifest the two great Courts of Heaven.

Oh, God's great splendour, I through which beheld
 The mighty triumph of the realm of truth,
 How I beheld Thee give me power to tell !
 Above is light which maketh to be seen 100
 The All-Creator by that creature's sense
 Who finds his peace alone in seeing Him,
 And it enlargeth in the circle's form
 So mightily, that its circumference
 Would be too large a girdle for the sun. 105
 So much as seen of it was as one ray
 Gilding the summit of the primal sphere,
 Which thence derives its life and active power.
 And as a hill in water at its foot
 Looks as it were to see itself bedecked, 110
 When it is rich in verdure and in flower,
 So leaning o'er the Light and all around
 I saw on seats unnumbered, looking thus,
 All of mankind from earth to heaven returned.
 And if the lowest rank have in itself 115
 A light so radiant, ah, how glorious then
 The outer leaves of the celestial Rose !
 My vision in the fulness and the height
 Was not confounded, but embraced the whole,
 Both the amount and nature of the joy. 120
 Nearness and distance add not there nor take,
 For where God without mediate agents works,
 The law of nature hath no longer place.

- In the gold centre of the eternal Rose,
 Which spreads, by stages rises, breathing forth 125
 Odours of praise to the ever vernal sun,
 Like unto one, who silent yet would speak
 Did Beatrice draw me, and she said—"Observe
 " How vast the assembly of the milk-white robes !
 " Behold our city and how large its bounds ! 130
 " Behold so filled are these our countless seats
 " That few new occupants are needed now !
 " On that great throne on which thine eyes are fixed
 " With wonder at the crown above it placed,
 " Ere at these holy nuptials thou shalt sup, 135
 " The soul shall sit, on earth to be august,
 " Of the great Henry, who will come to bring
 " Order to Italy ere it be prepared.
 " The blind cupidity which bewitches men
 " Shall make their actions like the little child's, 140
 " Which, hunger-dying, drives its nurse away.
 " Then in the sacred forum shall preside
 " One who by open as by secret ways
 " Shall not go with him in his royal path.
 " But after this God shall not brook him long 145
 " In his high office, for he shall be plunged
 " Where Simon Magus howls for his deserts,
 " And lower still d'Alagna shall be thrust."

CANTO XXXI.

Description of the two Courts of Heaven. New marvels of imagination and poetry. Dante, in his wonder, turns towards Beatrice, but is addressed by Bernard. The Saint calls his attention towards the Blessed Virgin surrounded by thousands of angelic and triumphant glories.

Like a white rose, then, both in hue and form
Was shown to me the army of the saints,
Whom Christ had made His own with His own blood ;
The other host which in their flight behold
And sing His glory who their love inspires, 5
And that great goodness whence their glory comes,
As in the summer flowers a swarm of bees
One moment plunge themselves, the next return
To where their labour is with honey crowned,
In the great flower descended, which is decked 10
With leaves unnumbered, re-ascending thence
To where their Love hath His eternal home.
Their faces all were as the living flame,
Their wings were golden, and all else so white,
There is no snow with whiteness so unstained. 15

While in the flower they dipped, from rank to rank
 They scattered round the fervour and the peace
 Which they acquired fanning their wings in heaven.
 Nor though between the Flower and Throne above
 There was so great a multitude on wing, 20
 Did this obstruct the splendour or the view ;
 Because the light divine so penetrates
 The world in measure of receptive power,
 That nowhere can an obstacle exist.
 This realm so peaceful, so with gladness filled, 25
 Rich in the saints of Scripture Old and New,
 Turned to one point alone desire and eye.
 Oh, Triune Light, which in a single star
 Thus sparkling, makes their vision so content,
 Look on the storms which ravage us below ! 30
 If the Barbarians coming from the land
 Which is by Helice covered every day,
 As near her son beloved she ever rolls,
 Beholding Rome, and her imperial towers
 Were dumb with wonder, when the Lateran 35
 In splendour all the works of man surpassed ;
 I who had come from human to divine,
 Who to eternity from time had come,
 From Florence to a people just and wise,
 Ah, with what stupor must I needs be filled ! 40
 Truly between the stupor and the joy
 It was delight to hear not, and be mute.

And as a weary Pilgrim soon revives,
Looking upon the temple of his vow,
And hopes to tell its glories to his friends, 45
So in the living light, and gazing wide,
I caused mine eyes to rove from rank to rank,
Now up, now down, now in the circle round.
Faces I saw which moved the heart to love,
Glorious in holy light, and their own smiles, 50
And movements rich in all that giveth grace.
The figure general of Paradise
Already was conceived in my survey,
But yet no single point mine eye had stayed ;
And with increase of eagerness I turned 55
Towards my lady to inquire of things
Which wakened doubts to agitate my mind.
I looked for one, another made reply,
Beatrice I thought to see, I saw instead
An aged man, clothed as the glorious saints. 60
His eyes were glowing, and his cheeks suffused
With joy benign, and as it might become
A tender father so his gestures were.
“ Where then is she ?”—I hastily exclaimed,
And he replied ;—“ Thy longings to content, 65
“ Beatrice hath stirred me from my home of rest ;
“ And thou shalt see her if thou upward look
“ In the third circle from the highest rank,
“ Upon the throne her merits made elect.”

I answered not, but lifted up mine eyes, 70
 And I beheld her as she were a crown
 Reflecting from itself the eternal rays.
 From that high space where thunders loudest roll,
 No eye of mortal man was distant more
 However deep in the great ocean plunged, 75
 Than was from Beatrice the stretch of mine ;
 But this was no obstruction, for her form
 Came down to me through medium undisturbed.
 “ Oh Thou who makest evergreen my hope,
 “ Lady, who for my safety didst not scorn 80
 “ To leave thy traces in the realm of hell ;
 “ Of things so many which mine eyes have seen,
 “ To thy beneficence and power I owe
 “ The grace and force the glory to behold.
 “ I was in slavery ; thou hast made me free, 85
 “ By every method and by all the means
 “ In which the virtue lay to make me so.
 “ Preserve in me thy rich magnificence,
 “ So that the soul, thou hast restored to health,
 “ May thee content when from the body loosed.” 90
 Such was my prayer ; and she, although she seemed
 So distant far, looked upon me and smiled,
 Then to the Fount Eternal turned away.
 The aged saint then spake—“ That to the end
 “ Of thy great journey thou mayest surely reach, 95
 “ For which I have been sent by prayer and love,

“ Over this garden let thine eyes take flight,
“ For in beholding it shall they acquire
“ More force to penetrate the ray divine ;
“ And she, the Queen of Heaven, for whom I burn 100
“ With such deep love, shall do us every grace,
“ Because her faithful Bernard I am called.”
Like him who haply from Croatia comes •
To see our Veronica, and in awe
Of its great glory cannot gaze enough, 105
And whilst he gazes thinketh to himself,
Christ Jesus, oh my Lord, one God and true,
Was then thy holy countenance like this ?
So was I, seeing in its living light
The love of him who on this earthly stage 110
Tasted in contemplation heavenly peace.
“ This joy celestial, oh, thou child of grace,”
He then began, “ by thee shall not be known,
“ Long as thine eyes rest in this lower sphere ;
“ But lift them to the circles most remote, 115
“ So that thou see upon her throne the Queen
“ Who by this realm is worshipped and obeyed.”
I raised mine eyes, and as when morning breaks,
The eastern part of the horizon shines
With brighter light than where the sun descends, 120
So, from some valley passing, as it were,
To some high hill, I in the loftiest zone
Saw one point brighter far than all around.

And as that part where men the Chariot wait,
Which Phaeton failed to guide, more brightly glows, 125
And elsewhere light in measure groweth faint,
So this pacific oriflamme did flash
In central brightness, whilst on every side
Just in proportion shone a feebler flame.
And at this centre with extended wings 130
Rejoicing angels numberless I saw,
Each with a joy and brightness of its own.
There at their choral movements and their songs
I saw such beauty smile, that at the sight
The eyes of all the other saints were glad. 135
And if I had as great a wealth of words
As of imagination, still my pen
Would dread to paint the least of her delights.
When Bernard saw so earnestly mine eyes
Fixed and intent on Mary's quickening warmth, 140
His own with such great love towards her turned,
That mine became more ardent in their gaze.

CANTO XXXII.

Bernard points out the Saints of the Old and the New Covenant. He answers some doubts of Dante touching the presence of Infants in Paradise. Marvellous beauties of description.

- With loving eyes still fixed that saintly soul,
Although unasked, assumed the teacher's part,
And in these holy words began to teach—
“ The wound which Blessèd Mary closed and healed,
“ She at her feet so fair to look upon 5
“ Opened, and by her disobedience chafed.
“ In order of the seats, in the third rank,
“ Below her sitteth Rachel, and behold
“ There also sitteth Beatrice herself.
“ Sarah, Rebecca, Judith, and with them 10
“ Her from whom sprang the Psalmist, who exclaimed
“ *Mei miserere* sorrowing for his sin,
“ Thou mayest perceive thus downward seat by seat
“ Succeed each other, as I naming each
“ Go by the Rose, descending leaf by leaf. 15

- " As down to it, so from the seventh step down,
 " In ordered sequence Hebrew women come,
 " Dividing all the petals of the flower ;
 " Because according to the way in which
 " Faith looketh upon Christ, these are the wall 20
 " Which makes partition in the holy steps.
 " On this side where the flower is all complete
 " With its whole wealth of foliage, have their seats
 " Those who believed in Christ though yet to come ;
 " Whilst on the other, where by vacant space 25
 " Are cut the semicircles, those are placed
 " Who saw Christ come already and believed.
 " And as at this part the most glorious throne
 " Of heaven's high lady and the other seats
 " Below it such a separation make, 30
 " So in the opposite, the seat of John,
 " Who, ever holy, in the desert dwelt,
 " Bore martyr's sufferings, and two years of hell ;
 " And him below, thus make partition fixed
 " Augustine, Francis, Benedict, and then 35
 " From rank to rank the rest in order down.
 " Now do thou mark God's providence divine,
 " For the two mentioned aspects of the Faith
 " In like proportion shall the garden fill.
 " And know that downward from the step which cuts 40
 " The two divisions at their central space,
 " No one hath seat by merit of his own,

- " But by another's under terms defined ;
 " For they are all souls from the flesh let loose
 " Ere light they had to choose the way of truth. 45
 " This from their faces thou canst well perceive,
 " And also from their voices' childish tones,
 " If thou with eye and ear give careful heed.
 " Now doubttest thou and silent art in doubt !
 " But I shall loose from thee the potent cords 50
 " By which thy subtle thoughts retain thee bound.
 " Within the amplitude of this high realm
 " A chance event can never have a place,
 " Just as can never, sadness, hunger, thirst,
 " For by eternal law, whatever here 55
 " Thou see'st, is stablished, with adjustment true
 " As to the finger corresponds the ring.
 " Therefore this swarm of souls hurried unripe
 " To the true life, are *sine causa* not
 " Less or more excellent among themselves. 60
 " The King by whom this kingdom lies at rest
 " In so much love, in so much pure delight,
 " That no desire may dare to pass beyond,
 " All minds creating in the aspect glad
 " Of His own joy, as He is pleased, endows 65
 " With grace unequal, let the fact suffice !
 " And this is pointed out express and clear
 " In the most holy Scriptures, where the twins
 " Even in their mother's womb were stirred to wrath.

- " Wherefore as in the colour of the hair 70
 " The grace is various, so the light supreme
 " Those spirits with degrees of glory crowns.
 " Thus then, without all merit of their works,
 " In different ranks of order are they placed,
 " Differing alone as first by grace endowed. 75
 " In the incipient ages of the world,
 " With innocence, salvation to make sure,
 " No more was needed than the parent's faith.
 " After the earlier ages passed away,
 " Then to give strength unto their innocent wings, 80
 " Was circumcision needful in the males.
 " But when at length the day of grace arrived,
 " Without completed baptism of Christ,
 " Such innocence in limbo was retained.
 " Fix now thy gaze upon the face which most 85
 " Resembles Christ, for it alone is bright
 " To make thee capable of seeing Christ."
 I saw upon her rain so great a shower
 Of holy gladness by the angels brought,
 Created through these heights sublime to fly, 90
 Not all, whatever I had seen till then
 With such an admiration held me bound,
 Nor showed me anything so like to God ;
 And that sweet spirit, which descending first,
Ave Maria gratia plena sang, 95
 Before her spread the glory of his wings,

An answer came to this divinest chant

From every part of the celestial court,

So that all objects seemed more full of peace.

“ Ah blessèd father ! who disdainest not

100

“ For me thus low from that sweet place to come

“ Which by decree eternal is thy seat ;

“ Who is that angel who beholds our Queen,

“ Looking with joy so great into her eyes,

“ That all enamoured he appears like fire ? ”

105

Thus the instructions once again I sought

Of Him, whom Mary made more beautiful,

Just as the star of morning by the sun.

He answered me—“ Boldness and gentle grace,

“ All that may be in angel or in soul,

110

“ Is found in him, and so we wish it should ;

“ For this is he who bore to earth the palm

“ To blessèd Mary, when the Son of God

“ Willed that Himself should bear the load for men.

“ But come thou now and with thine eyes observe

115

“ Whilst I am speaking, the renownèd peers

“ Of this most holy empire and most just.

“ Those two who sit so high and fuller seem

“ Of happiness because so near their Queen,

“ Are as it were the rose’s double root.

120

“ He on the left hand who is nearest her,

“ That father is whose daring appetite

“ Caused man such woful bitterness to taste.

- " Upon her right the ancient father see
 " Of holy Church, to whom by Christ was given 125
 " The keys in trust of this delightful flower.
 " And he who saw before his hour of death
 " All the sad sorrows of the comely spouse,
 " Won by the spear and by the cruel nails,
 " Sits near to him ; and near the former sits 130
 " That leader, under whom on manna lived
 " The ungrateful people fickle, stiff of neck.
 " To Peter opposite see Anna sit,
 " With gazing on her daughter so content,
 " She sings Hosanna, but no eye she moves. 135
 " And fronting the great father of mankind,
 " Is seated Lucia, who thy lady moved,
 " That hour thine eyelids drooped in downward flight.
 " But since the period of thy vision flees,
 " Here let us pause as the good workman doth, 140
 " Who as he has the cloth so cuts the robe ;
 " And let us look towards the eternal Love,
 " That thou, as far as possible may pierce,
 " Beholding him, into His glorious light.
 " Truly, and lest perhaps thou fallest back, 145
 " Moving thy wings, and thinking to advance ;
 " With prayer it needs thee to solicit grace,
 " The grace of her who hath the power to help ;
 " And with affection do thou follow me,
 " So that thy heart be one with what I say ;" 150
 And then his holy prayer he thus commenced.

CANTO XXXIII.

Bernard prays to the Virgin Mary. Dante quickened in vision beholds the ineffable mystery of the thrice Holy Trinity. In the second of the divine circles he sees the form of a man. He desires to know how the Natures divine and human are united. A sudden flash of light reveals to him what is beyond description. The vision is closed.

- “ Oh, Virgin Mother, daughter of thy Son,
“ Humblest and greatest of created things,
“ Purpose elect of the eternal mind,
“ Thou—thou art she who hath such glory brought
“ To human nature : He did not disdain 5
“ Himself its Maker to become its work.
“ Within thy womb rekindled was the love,
“ The warmth of which has caused that blessed flower
“ In everlasting peace to germinate.
“ Here unto us thou art the noonday sun 10
“ Of holy love, and on the earth below,
“ Thou art the fount of ever living hope.
“ Lady, so great thy might, so potent thou,
“ Whoever seeketh grace and seeks not thee,
“ He wills a flight without the wings to fly. 15

- “Thy bounteousness not only succour brings
“To him who asks it, but uncounted times
“Has freely given before the prayer was made.
“In thee is mercy, pity is thy name,
“Glory supreme is thine, in thee is heaped 20
“Whate’er of goodness in the creature lies.
“He who here cometh from the lowest hell
“Of the great universe, and who hath seen
“In the three realms, in turn, the spirit lives,
“Prays unto thee for that high grace of power 25
“Which may enable him to lift his eyes
“Unto the height sublime of sovran bliss.
“And I who never sight for self did crave
“Warmly as now for him, my prayers present,
“And this I pray, that these may not be null, 30
“For thou canst set him free from every cloud
“Born of his mortal nature by thy prayers,
“So that he clearly see the joy supreme.
“I pray thee, too, oh Queen, with whom the will
“Is equal with the power, that thou preserve 35
“After such vision his affections sound.
“Let thy protection human passion check ;
“Behold how Beatrice, how many saints,
“To make my prayer prevailing, clasp their hands.”
Those eyes in which God taketh such delight 40
Fixed on the speaker, made it seen indeed
How very sweet to her are prayers devout.

They then were turned towards the Eternal Light,
And into this may none believe that eye
Of other creature ever saw so clear. 45
And I who was approaching to the goal
Of all my longings, lost within myself,
As happens oft, the ardour of desire.
Then Bernard smiled, and made to me a sign
That I should upward look, but I had done 50
By my own impulse as his wishes willed ;
For now my power of sight becoming pure
Did deep and deeper penetrate the ray
Of the great Light Divine and very Truth.
From this time forward greater was my sight 55
Than human speech, which at such vision fails,
And to such glory memory cedeth place.
As he who in his slumber something sees,
And the dream passing off, the impression holds,
Although the dream itself return no more, 60
So did I feel, for almost wholly gone
My vision was, and yet within my heart
Distilled the sweetness that thereof was born.
Thus doth the snow lose form before the sun,
And by the wind in the light stirring leaves, 65
Thus was the sentence of the Sibyl lost.
Oh, Light Supreme, who art so raised above
The thoughts of mortals, to my memory grant
A second glimpse of what Thou once appeared,

And make my tongue so eloquent of speech, 70
That of Thy glorious self one spark at least
It may convey to nations yet to come ;
For unto memory even that slight return,
And in these verses even a feeble sound,
Thy might victorious shall make better known. 75
I think, so overpowering was its force,
I had been blinded by that living ray,
Had I once sought to turn mine eyes aside.
And I remember I my courage roused
Its glory to sustain, so that my gaze 80
In union met the Almighty infinite.
Oh, grace abounding whence the boldness came
By which mine eyes did pierce the Eternal Light
So far that vision there was wholly spent !
In its abyss I saw together held, 85
Bound in one volume, with the clasp of love,
All that is spread throughout the world at large ;
Accident, substance, and their qualities,
By mode ineffable so bound in one,
What I describe gives but a feeble glimpse. 90
The Essence universal of this knot
Methinks I saw, because the more my pen
On this enlarges, more of joy I feel.
To me one moment more oblivion is
Than ages twenty-five to that emprise 95
When Neptune wondering Argo's shadow saw.

And thus my mind in deep abstraction held,
Gazed fixedly, immovable, absorbed,
And ever gazing more enraptured grew.
This Light so fully doth the mind impress, 100
That to be turned away to other things
It is impossible it should consent ;
Because all good, the object of desire,
Concentrates in it, and apart from this,
That is defective which is perfect there. 105
Henceforth more brokenly shall come my words,
Even for such poor remembrance, than the child's,
Whose tongue still finds its moisture at the breast ;
Not that the living light which I beheld
More than one aspect pure and simple bore, 110
For it is ever as it always was ;
But by the vision which was gaining strength
Within me, as I looked, I suffering change,
That one sole aspect had the change in me.
Within the essence of that holy light, 115
Profound and clear, three circles I perceived
In colour triple, in extent alike ;
As Iris from the Iris, one from one
Of these reflected seemed, the third like fire
Breathed forth with equal energy from both. 120
Alas ! how powerless are my words, how weak
To speak my thoughts ! and these to what I saw
How poor, and how inadequate the term !

Oh, Light Eternal, sole Thyself within,
Self understood alone, and by Thyself 125
Knowing and known ; Thyself Thy love and joy !
That circle which conceived and formed in Thee
Gave the appearance of reflected light
Awhile by me in close observance held,
Within itself, of its own colour still, 130
Seemed painted with the effigy of man,
Wherefore it wholly rivetted my gaze.
As the Geometer with heart and soul
To square the circle, seeks yet cannot find,
With all his thought, the principle he needs, 135
So did myself at this new vision feel ;
I wished to understand the accord which joined
Image to circle, how adapted there ;
But my own wings were not for flight like this,
Had not my mind been stricken by a flash 140
Of light in which its wish was satisfied.
The lofty vision here surpassed my powers ;
But as a wheel is moved in every part,
So were desire and will controlled by Him,
The Love which moves the sun and other stars. 145

